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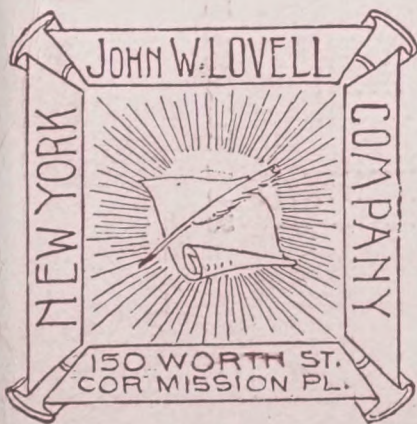
A MODERN MARRIAGE

BY



THE

Marquise Clara Lanza.



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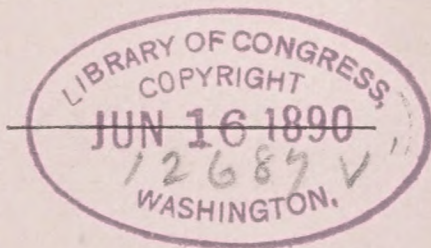
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A MODERN MARRIAGE

A NOVEL

BY

THE MARQUISE CLARA LANZA



NEW YORK

JOHN W. LOVELL COMPANY

150 WORTH STREET, CORNER MISSION PLACE

1890

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TO MY SONS

CORRADINO AND MANFREDI LANZA

THIS STUDY OF CONTEMPORARY MANNERS IS LOVINGLY DEDICATED
IN THE HOPE THAT WHEN IN YEARS TO COME IT SHALL
PASS INTO THEIR HANDS, THEY MAY BE LED TO
OVERLOOK ITS ARTISTIC IMPERFECTIONS IN
VIEW OF ITS SINCERITY AND TRUTH

THE AUTHOR

A MODERN MARRIAGE.

I.

MARION stirred uneasily in her sleep, finally opening her eyes with the bewildered expression of waking. She was quite alone and the room was cold. From between the closed shutters a narrow line of light shone like a fine gold thread. The mirror above the dressing-table made a square of luminous gray against the wall. The gas had been turned low in the small chandelier during the night, and a single faint spark of saffron burned as a pendent star in the centre of the apartment that was wrapped in heavy shadows and in total silence. She tossed back her hair, stretching her arms and yawning. How soundly she must have slept that she had not heard Philip rise or move

about the room ! For a few moments she lay still, struggling with an inclination to sleep again. Then all at once she sat up and passed one hand gently over the pillow beside her. It was chill to the touch, chill as marble. He must have been gone for some time, and doubtless it was now late. She slipped out of bed presently, smoothing the pliant folds of her cambric nightdress with its coquettish bows of mauve ribbon, her bare feet gleaming in the obscurity as she hastened to undo the shutters and turn on the steam that issued with a dull hiss from the radiator in the corner. Ugh, how cold it was ! The window-ledge glistened with the newly-fallen snow. The street was invisible from the height of the apartment. Before her sleep-dimmed eyes extended an unsightly and uniform vista of red bricks, brown stone facings, cornices, and chimneys. Above these hung wreaths of smoke, pale slate color verging to densest black against a turquoise sky. A couple of Gothic steeples

pierced the blue ether. Here and there, on a tall roof, lines of garments, freshly washed, flapped white and sun-illumined in the breeze. Oh, how ugly it all was, and how she hated to live up four long flights of stairs in this cheap flat with its small shabby rooms! But of course it could not be helped—nothing could be helped. When Philip was richer, she meant to have a whole house for themselves—a house with a white drawing-room furnished in delicate apricot and blue, and with hints of gilding and stained glass. She caught sight of her own figure in the mirror, slender and white-robed, with a soft fluttering effect of violet ribbons, and long strands of golden hair. She had often been told of her beauty, but how was it possible to look pretty in such miserable surroundings as these? She knew she was out of place in this plainly furnished chamber that flaunted boldly its hideous wallpaper, its stiff curtains, its flower-strewn Brussels carpet, and its dreadful gas fixtures.

She loved luxury and she despised poverty with all the force of a sensitive organization, and with the natural impatience of a woman who sees her best years slipping away in degrading and profitless striving.

She moved from the mirror and began to dress hurriedly, dragging the chair on which her clothes were lying, close beside the radiator. Her teeth chattered as she drew on her stockings and clasped her corset. She thought of a bright wood fire dancing beneath a chimney-piece loaded with Saxe and Sèvres, and surmounted by choice water-color drawings. What a contrast did this stiff radiator present, showing rows of copper pipes along a dun-colored wall! Was there anything more horrible than to worship instinctively the beautiful and costly, and yet to be always surrounded by the poorest and cheapest? Alas, the irony of life—the injustice of it! Night and day this thought assailed her and warped her youthful spirits, checking their natural buoyancy.

The water in the pitcher was icy, so she opened the door leading to the room beyond, and called impatiently, "Sarah !"

In the kitchen, which was even more cramped and unsightly than the bed-room, she could hear the maid-of-all-work stamping about ; and, above the sputtering noise of something frying on the range, a shrill voice was singing :

"I'm aweary, Lord, aweary,
Aweary of my sins."

"Sarah ! Sarah !" Marion's voice shook with cold and disgust. Her shoulders looked blue against the dead white paint.

"Yes'm, I'm coming."

The singing had ceased abruptly. Sarah, a large woman who appeared still more immense than she actually was, by reason of the low ceiling, emerged from the ill-smelling kitchen wiping her coarse red hands on her apron like a giant preparing for a fray. Philip had appropriately nicknamed her "the slugger."

“Sarah, I can’t wash in this water. It’s positively freezing. Bring me some from the kettle.”

The woman disappeared and presently returned with the water steaming in a tin can.

“What time is it, Sarah?”

“Going on ten, ma’am.”

“Gracious! I had no idea it was so late. Has Mr. Latimer been gone long?”

“He went out about half-past eight, ma’am.”

Marion dipped her fingers into the basin. “What have you got for breakfast, Sarah?” she asked. “Don’t say eggs, for I am sick to death of them. I won’t eat eggs again this week—I really won’t.”

The servant grinned. “Well’m, I can cut you off a slice of the ham.”

“Cut me off a slice of the ham!” Marion repeated, resignedly. “Well, I suppose the ham must do. What I should like this morning would be a lamb chop with water

cresses, and a dish of hot-house strawberries."

"Lord'm ! you couldn't get 'em nowhere under three dollars."

"Of course I couldn't. Therefore, instead of the lamb chop and the strawberries, you may serve the ham and a piece of toast. Are there any letters ?"

"No'm."

"Any packages by mail or express ?"

"Not a package'm."

"Thank heaven for that !" Marion exclaimed, fervently. "If another had come, I don't know what desperate thing I should do."

She went into the study after breakfast. It was a tiny room like the rest, and unmistakably the "den" of a literary man. The round table was littered with papers and books. Dwarf book-shelves stretched in a bald monotony of oiled pine around the walls. A steel engraving of Thackeray and an etching of George Eliot hung one on each

side of the door. On a smaller table stood a bottle of cheap brandy and some equally cheap cigars. A mild disorder reigned everywhere. The waste basket, on which was perched a stuffed owl, was piled high with scraps of paper ; and several torn letters and crumpled pages lay strewn over the floor. Through the curtainless window the winter sun flickered lazily.

Marion sat down in her husband's chair and turned over a few of the papers. Ah, yes ! this was his new article—the one he meant to offer to the *Metropolitan Magazine*. It certainly began very well : “ Charles Lamb, in his well-known essay on books, undoubtedly recognized ”—and so forth. Yes, that was very good indeed—calculated to chain the reader's attention at once. Everything Philip wrote was clever. He had style, and that was what people wanted nowadays—style. He ought to make a great deal of money soon, and then they could move out of this horrid flat, and he could

give up his newspaper work. Writing tiresome editorials for the *Evening Messenger* was hardly in Philip's line; and the subjects they gave him were really too dry and uninteresting. It was always the tariff—from Monday morning till Saturday night, nothing but the tariff! Still, she reflected, if it were not for that they could not live at all. The fugitive poems, essays, and stories that he wrote from time to time were seldom accepted by the various editors to whom they were dispatched. Only yesterday a significant package had arrived by mail. The moment she saw it she had recognized its bulky proportions with a feeling of crushing disappointment. There was no mistaking that oblong shape with a publisher's address printed in blue letters in one corner. It was the story, of course—the story he had written with so much care, and had read aloud to her with such firm confidence of its acceptance. And here it was again, returning after many days, like the scriptural bread

cast upon the waters ! Tears had risen to her eyes as she took the parcel from Sarah's hands, and some of her magnificent expectations crumbled away as dust. The mere sight of that brown envelope filled her soul with loathing. She had thrust it unopened into a drawer, lacking the courage to tell him about it immediately. She dreaded the look of trenchant chagrin that invariably clouded his hopeful face when one of these grim and odious packets was thrust into the letter box, or handed brutally in at the door by an expressman. He never said much. He was too proud for that. But she knew, nevertheless, that the blows fell heavily, and each time were accompanied by so sickening a sense of failure, that for a while his industry was checked, his inspiration stifled.

For a few moments she sat listlessly fingering the closely-written pages before her, so absorbed in her unpleasant reflections that for once she failed to hear the

shrill tinkle of the door-bell, that dread messenger of coming evil. It was not until a fresh young voice greeted her that she turned in surprise.

“Marion, my dear, what are you doing? Surely you have not become literary. Have you forgotten what old Monsieur Lemerrier, our French teacher, used to make us write in our copy books? ‘Une femme qui écrit a deux torts, elle augmente le nombre des livres, et elle diminue le nombre des femmes.’ To be sure, Monsieur Lemerrier’s wife was a novelist who eventually went raving mad after leading him a dog’s life. Yet I am not certain that his favorite maxim is not perfectly true. At any rate, one scribe is sufficient for a family. Frankly, Philip is as much as we can stand.”

Marion smiled. The new-comer resembled her strongly. Both young women had the same fine pale hair, the same dazzling fairness of complexion, the same lithe elegance and grace. Marion’s face was, how-

ever, somewhat thinner in its delicate oval than her sister's, and her figure was less matronly.

"Is that you, Emily? I was wondering why you had not been to see me. I didn't come to you on account of your moving. It's quite three weeks since I've seen you. Three whole weeks—and such horrid weeks as they have been, too!

Mrs. Carter kissed her sister affectionately and dropped into a chair facing her. "But you haven't told me what you are doing, dear. Not writing, I sincerely hope. Think of Madame Lemercier and be warned in time!"

The speaker was beautifully dressed, and her clear-cut, aristocratic features rose above the sombre brown of her cloth gown like a fragile flower from a vase of bronze.

"Oh, bother Madame Lemercier!" Marion replied, impatiently. "Of course I'm not writing. You ought to know by this time that I can't compose an ordinary letter with-

out calling in the assistance of the dictionary and Roget's Thesaurus, and even then making a mess of the whole thing. I was just reading this new thing of Philip's. See how nicely it begins—'Charles Lamb, in his well-known essay' "——

"Now, Marion, come out of that chair and let Charles Lamb alone. I don't want to hear Philip's article. My tastes are not a bit literary, and I can't understand things unless I see them in print. Besides, I want to talk to you. I should have come sooner to learn how you were getting on, dear; but baby hasn't been well, and we've been frightfully busy moving into our new house. It's perfectly lovely—the house, I mean. I want you to come back with me for luncheon."

"Yes, I dare say it is lovely," Marion said, drawing a deep breath. "You have everything money can buy. I don't want to appear envious or ill-natured, but oh, Emily, if you could only realize how sick I am of this nasty flat and the heaps and heaps of bills!

Somehow our expenses seem to increase every month. I don't understand it, but it's so."

"Well, try not to think about it," said Mrs. Carter, gently stroking her muff. "What good does it do to worry and fret, and get into a morbid state that turns your complexion yellow and makes blue circles round your eyes? There's no use sitting down and brooding over disagreeable facts. It doesn't alter the facts, and it does hurt you."

This cheerful philosophy did not impress Marion very forcibly. "Oh, it's easy enough for rich people to talk that way," she retorted peevishly, detecting an absence of sympathy in her sister's words. "It's all very fine to preach about patience and content and Christian resignation when you have a big balance at your banker's."

"Come, don't be cross, dear. Besides, you recollect you married Philip of your own free will, knowing him to be a pauper. You

voluntarily chose poverty and I chose wealth. Why then complain? Your bed is of your own making."

Marion flushed a little at the apparent injustice of this speech. "You know, Emily, I had no idea of poverty when I promised to marry Philip. You forgot that we were rich at that time, and afterward I loved him too well to cast him off."

"Oh, of course, love is all right, dear, if you can afford it. But sentiment, like everything else, is not to be enjoyed for nothing. Then, too, it's just as easy to love a rich man as a poor scribbler like Philip."

"He isn't a poor scribbler; he is a great genius, as you will find out some day."

"Well, I hope so for your sake," Mrs. Carter replied, dryly. There was a pause, during which a hand-organ in the street was heard dolefully grinding out the *Boulangier March*. Emily hummed the tune, beating time with her slender gloved fingers against her muff. The languorous light grew a

trifle brighter as the sun mounted higher in the heavens. The snow began to soften and melt, gradually dripping from the eaves of the tall apartment-house. From the kitchen came the sound of Sarah's voice shrieking to the butcher boy—"Them chickens you brought yesterday wasn't fit to eat, do you hear? Tell your master to take 'em off the book." Then a door slammed and a greasy smell crept along the entry.

"It's lucky you've got no child, isn't it?" Mrs. Carter resumed presently, in a matter-of-fact tone. "There isn't a spot where you could put a cradle or—or anything. And when the baby cried, you could hear it all over the place. Yes, it's decidedly fortunate you have no child."

Marion wheeled round with sudden passion. "For goodness' sake, stop harping upon my restrictions and deprivations!" she exclaimed, almost fiercely. "Can't you see I am doing my best to forget them all? I dare say it amuses you to contemplate my trou-

bles! But just put yourself in my place: you wouldn't laugh then, Emily. Fancy having to stay here by yourself all day, with an awful servant singing hymns in the kitchen, and knowing that each time the bell rang a tradesman with a bill to collect was standing outside, or else an expressman with a rejected manuscript."

Mrs. Carter became serious at once. Marion did not often give way to these impotent outbursts. She rose swiftly and laid one arm about her sister's neck.

"I didn't mean to annoy you, dear. But tell me, is it really so bad as that?"

"Of course it is. Do you suppose I am inventing it for my own amusement?" Marion leaned toward the table, and taking up a pen began to pick holes in a sheet of Philip's manuscript. "Somehow you never say anything pleasant or funny, Emily," she added more quietly. "Haven't you any jokes, or scandals, or agreeable news of any kind to communicate?"

“Well, I have a small piece of news. We are going to give a ball—a sort of house-warming entertainment. Charles has been making lots of money lately in Wall Street, and you know how he likes to spend it. I never saw a man who had so little appreciation of the practical value of dollars and cents as Charles. But he lets me do as I please, so I don’t care much.”

Marion’s troubled face had grown animated at the word “ball.”

“I haven’t been to one since I was married,” she said, in a low, clear voice. “I’ve almost forgotten how to dance.”

“There is absolutely no reason, dear, why you should live like a hermit, merely because you are not rich,” Mrs. Carter remarked, soothingly. “It’s a shame! You are too young and too pretty for that. I want people to see and admire you. You will make a sensation at my ball. Now”—abruptly—“what have you got to wear?”

“What is the use of asking me such a

question? I have nothing—absolutely nothing—as you are aware.”

“H’m. Then you must see about getting something at once.”

“You know, Emily,” Marion continued, earnestly, “I can’t appear in my wedding gown again. That is utterly impossible. It wouldn’t be decent. The wedding gown must go. I’ve worn it at every blessed dinner you have asked us to since our marriage; it has done duty at all of papa’s receptions. For two years it has been a conspicuous feature at the literary gatherings of Philip’s intellectual acquaintances. Miss Bertram has ceased to mention me in her ‘Society Column,’ because she hasn’t the courage to say again that ‘Mrs. Philip Latimer wore a striking costume of white satin, etc. I have had that frock high in the neck and *décolletée*; I have worn it with a train and curtailed; it has been trimmed with lace, feathers, ribbons, *passementerie*. Heaven knows what it *hasn’t* been trimmed with.

It has been turned upside down and hind part before. But it is always the same gown. There's no getting over that fact. At present it has reached a point where further modification is impossible. Stop! I am wrong there. It might do yet for a tea-gown with a proper accompaniment of beaded net. Yes, the tea-gown is still in reserve. But I could hardly come to your ball in a tea-gown, no matter how startlingly elegant it might be."

Both sisters broke into a gentle ripple of laughter. Marion's sense of humor was very acute. "Don't bother about the gown," said Emily, affably, "I will give you a new one."

"Oh, you dear, sweet thing!" Marion sprang to her feet and bestowed a sprightly hug upon Mrs. Carter. "You mustn't mind my bad temper, Emily. If it wasn't for you I believe I should commit suicide or run away—become a mysterious disappearance in high life. It is high life up here on

the fifth floor. There! don't look shocked. I was only joking. But poverty is so demoralizing. It puts such dreadful thoughts into one's head."

"Well, don't think about it. Come home with me to luncheon. I've got a splendid new *chef*. We are going to have a *suprême de volaille*. Afterward we can drive to Célestine's to order your ball dress."

"I declare I don't feel a bit blue now!" cried Marion, enthusiastically. "It just shows how good a little happiness is for one. If bills or 'declined-with-thanks' packages should arrive at this particular minute do you think I should care? No, I should treat them with scorn and contempt. My whole mind is filled with thoughts of the ball, my new gown, the people I shall meet. Be sure to invite all the charming people you know. Let me fetch my hat at once."

Mrs. Carter followed her sister into the bed-room that was still in disorder. The sunlight fell in a narrow bar upon the tum-

bled bed-clothes. The window had not been opened to air the apartment. The mirror was thick with dust where the light struck it. Marion opened the door, calling peremptorily :

“Sarah, come and make the room at once; it is like a pig-sty. It makes my head ache to breathe in it.”

The servant came in, threw the window open, and began to strip the sheets from the bed, tossing them upon the floor in a heap.

“Don’t forget to turn the mattress, Sarah,” Marion cautioned. “You didn’t turn it yesterday. I want the mattress turned every day, otherwise it will get into two big hollows. I’m going to stick pins in the edge, so that I can tell whether you have turned it or not.”

Sarah grinned, laboring with the mattress. Mrs. Carter moved suddenly toward her sister. “Have you seen papa lately?” she asked.

"Yes." Marion turned from the mirror where she was powdering her cheeks with *veloutine*. She whispered so that Sarah should not hear. "He is going to give another party—he is, indeed. And the sofa has gone again."

"It is perfectly disgraceful, the way he goes on," murmured Mrs. Carter, with a frown. In the study, as they were passing out, she called Marion back. "Here, give him this," and she flung a twenty-dollar note upon the table, shutting her purse with a little wrathful click. "Let him get the sofa back and pay for his lemonade and sandwiches."

Marion stood in the doorway, expostulating. "You know, Emily, he will not touch this money if he learns that it comes from you."

"Then don't tell him I sent it. Say it is your own."

"My own!" re-echoed Marion, with a cheerless laugh. "Do you suppose he

would believe so Munchausen-like a tale? Really, Emily, you must be out of your mind. I with twenty dollars to give away—a likely story!”

“Nonsense! you can say that Philip has sold a manuscript for a fabulous sum, and that you are consequently rolling in wealth—temporarily. Say anything you please, only he must be made to take it. I can’t have people know that my father is pawning his furniture in order to give a party to a crowd of disreputable persons. If he will not sustain the family pride, I must do it for him. That’s all.”

“Well, I will see what can be done.” Marion took the money. As they closed the outer door she drew a long breath of relief. From the bed-room Sarah’s lusty voice could be heard singing—

“I’ve been redeemed,
I’ve been redeemed—
Washed by the blood of the lamb.”

The sound lingered in her ears long after she had descended the stairs and stepped into her sister's coupé that stood before the entrance.

“I must have a different life,” she thought, rebelliously. “I must make it different.”

II.

DOUBTLESS she was to some extent justified in feeling ill at ease, dissatisfied, and discouraged. Try as she would to avoid it, her mind reverted constantly to the past. As in a dream her thoughts travelled back into the dim perspective of long ago, when her father had been rich and they had lived in a wide, old-fashioned house in West Tenth Street—a house with square, light-tinted chambers, and sharply suggestive of the days when Tenth Street had been uptown and represented metropolitan wealth and culture. She recollected perfectly the shadowy parlors, two in number, with their gilt cornices, marble mantels, and white stucco. She recalled the curtains of faded reps looped back with cords and tassels, and the furniture arranged with orderly precision.

In those times she had enjoyed all the privileges money could confer. Mrs. Hartly had died of a lingering disease when the two girls, Emily and Marion, were in short frocks, with their pale blonde hair flowing loosely upon their shoulders. After that they were left entirely to their father's care.

Clever, brilliant, generous, yet absolutely lacking in firmness of character or mental stability, he had indulged their every wish. Nothing was denied them. They spent thousands in gowns, and squandered hundreds in sensational novels and perfumery. His own occupations were many and varied, but they were chiefly the aims and pleasures of a rich man in whom Bohemian instincts predominate. Richard Hartly's wealth, always had the appearance of an accident or a chimera. People smiled when they were informed that he was a capitalist. It was as if some out-at-elbows creature, who munched bread and cheese in a dreary lodging, should suddenly pull aside a portière

and reveal priceless treasures. As far back as the girls could remember, their home had been redolent with the atmosphere of the theatre and the concert hall, and pervaded with a decided aroma of poverty-stricken literature and seedy comic vocalism. From far and near were the votaries of art gathered together, and many a previously unread author and unheard actor owed his ultimate success to the liberality of Richard Hartly. He had always been ready not only to encourage and to lend, but to give unstintingly. In every new "artist" he appeared to see an embryo genius upon whom a fair trial, unhampered by sordid grovelling and worry, would bestow glittering, soaring wings. His geniuses, it must be confessed, often disappointed him. Like other enthusiasts, he sometimes found pewter where he had confidently expected to discover the sheen of gold. Yet he never lost faith in human nature or human possibilities on this account. It was his mission in life, he told himself,

to assist struggling merit from obscurity and the back-garret into the bright sun-illuminated glare of fame, furnished apartments, and *tables d'hôtes*. And since he had the pecuniary means to accomplish this noble enterprise, and was moreover a kind father to his girls, why should anybody find fault with him?

But one day there came a crash and a change. As if by magic, nearly the whole of his fortune was swept into the seething whirlpool of Wall Street. He had been advised to speculate, something he had never done before, and in listening to this counsel he found ruin staring him in the face. From that moment the *littérateur* with piles of unpublished manuscript; the great musician with the wonderful opera that no manager would bring out; the pallid poet who recited so beautifully and always had a new original epic in his pocket; were one and all reduced to the cruel necessity of looking out for themselves.

Hartly himself was more surprised than chagrined at this sudden alteration in his circumstances, and when his astonishment abated he shrugged his shoulders and accepted the inevitable with the true spirit of the Bohemian who wears satin or rags with equal complacency. He was not quite destitute. He had a little money left, enough to keep him from starvation, and he had talents that might be turned to account. He was musical, he was literary, he had inventive tastes. Once he had designed a patent shoe-fastener that would have brought him a fortune in itself, if there had not been some unfortunate hitch concerning its practical usefulness. He would set to work to improve and perfect this remarkable invention. Everybody would want his shoe-fastener. He could make another fortune as easily as not, and of course all the people he had helped up the steep road to wealth would come to his assistance. Both girls were fortunately engaged to be married

at this significant point in Richard Hartly's career. Emily had chosen for her husband a rich broker, whom she married a few weeks after her father's financial downfall. Unhappily, Charles Carter had mortally offended his father-in-law before the wane of the honeymoon, and now the two men were not on speaking terms. The trouble had arisen from the point-blank refusal of Carter to assist Mr. Hartly, by means of a loan, to regain a portion of what he had lost. Hartly, who had always given so much and so ungrudgingly, did not hesitate to ask for help, and Charles did not hesitate to deny him what he requested. He was as hard, cold, and unsympathetic as the other was generous and humane. He had but one passion, and that was money. He had made up his mind when he married Emily that he would not marry her father as well. He called Hartly shiftless, unscrupulous, and untrustworthy. He did not intend that a single dollar of the Carter money should stray

in the direction of a foolish old man who had lacked the wit to hold on to his "pile" when he had it, and who in the event of his amassing another would probably cast it to the winds as before.

Hartly had yielded to a natural impulse in turning in his embarrassment to his rich son-in-law, and he was deeply mortified at the result. But the climax came when Charles, having settled down with his wife and child to a life of prosperous ease, openly and loudly denounced his father-in-law as a sort of social outcast. Not only was the company he kept horrible and vulgar, but he was guilty likewise of sinful and disgraceful extravagance.

Since his misfortune Hartly had occupied the parlor floor in a shabby boarding-house on Lexington Avenue. The little money he had saved he had spent almost immediately, and now he eked out a miserable existence by writing for the press and composing ballads that he set to music. It was, however,

utterly impossible for him to either stifle or change the peculiar traits of character inherent in his organization, so he endeavored, to the best of his ability, to enliven the tedium of life by giving parties for which he was often unable to pay, and surrounding himself with what Charles sarcastically termed "a set of low daubers and penny-a-liners." To a man struggling to acquire a position in society all this was scandalous and dreadful in the extreme. His own father had kept a tailor-shop in Third Avenue. But the memory of his humble origin, if indeed he remembered it at all, did not prevent Charles from indulging in a storm of expostulation and entreaty when he was forced to consider seriously this domestic curse. Therefore he had gone, in the glory of a private carriage, patent leather shoes, and a *boutonnière*, to confer with his wife's father, and, if possible, exact a promise of different and better conduct in the future. But this time it was the old man who got the upper hand. Still smart-

ing beneath the cruel indifference to which he had been subjected, he promptly damned Charles for his impertinence, and in the course of five minutes peremptorily ordered him out of the house. He declared he would give as many parties as he liked, know whom he pleased, pay his bills or not, as suited his fancy; and he would thank Charles Carter to mind his own business. Some angry words had been exchanged, and Emily, who was weak and impressionable as wax, espoused her husband's cause. From that day Richard Hartly dwindled in the eyes of the Carters to the level of a family affliction that decency compelled them to keep strictly in the background, as though he were an imbecile, a maniac, or a physical monstrosity.

With Marion, however, things had been very different. Philip Latimer had been one of her father's "great discoveries." She had come into the house one winter afternoon, to find Richard Hartly wrapped in ecstasy in

the front parlor with a dark, æsthetic-looking young man, standing before him and reading aloud from a thick roll of manuscript. The young man had been invited to stay to dinner, and of course had accepted the invitation. Little by little, he became a frequent visitor at the Hartlys, and when he and Marion fell hopelessly in love with each other, her father secured for Philip a position as editorial writer on the *Evening Messenger*, declaring, in his usual impulsive fashion, that there was no reason why the young couple shouldn't marry whenever they chose. With her father's ample means always in sight, Marion had not cared whether Philip were poor or not. A girl who had expectations was entitled to the privilege of selecting a poor man for her husband, she said. When the "expectations" vanished she found her affections were too seriously involved to permit her to renounce Philip, although he honorably offered to release her from her engagement. Besides, she had firm and un-

bounded confidence in his superior talents and final rise to greatness. Other men, not half so splendidly endowed as he, made thousands a year from their writing. As time progressed, however, she was forced to admit that matters had not turned out as she supposed they would. After more than a year of married life Philip was still earning only a modest salary in the office of the *Evening Messenger*, and the road to fame lay yet unexplored before him. The girl chafed under the delay and grew restless as a blooded horse under a check-rein. She knew she was pretty, and she longed to shine in society as her sister did. She possessed that attribute which is fatal to those who are doomed to poverty—vanity intensified by overweening personal ambition. She desired social power, distinction, elegance. Gradually, as the months wore hopelessly on, her amiability and optimism became clouded by a cynical bitterness. Unfortunately, her nature contained nothing that enabled her to

successfully combat this tendency. Of religious training, she had none. She was wholly unschooled, both practically and theoretically, in the unfathomable mysteries that accompany faith in the unknown. Mr. Hartly, who styled himself an "individualist," had continually laughed at creeds and made merry over so-called eternal truths. He was wont to declare that every man was entitled to live his own life as he pleased, provided he willingly offended no one, and stood ready to accept all consequences that might devolve from his actions. As for what the world termed impurity and immorality, that was arrant nonsense, and he could prove it. People were good or bad according to their hearts and their intelligence, neither more nor less. The world had seen fit to set its face against certain things, and whenever it discovered their actual existence, a tremendous outcry ensued. But who was really the worse for all this horror and screaming? Were the relative positions of

anybody actually imperilled or undermined except in the imagination of that hydra-headed monster "Society," that persisted in asserting that to gratify one appetite, such as physical hunger, is good; while to give way to the passion of love, except under certain prescribed conditions, is a mortal sin? How such ridiculous rubbish ever came to be conceived by the mind of man, Mr. Hartly did not pretend to understand. For his part, he regarded all instincts and natural appetites as equal in value. He did not see why any distinction should be made, or where any distinction was applicable. Often when he had invited some brilliant, but untried, genius to dinner, he would propound his startling philosophy to the dumb amazement of his guest and the rippling laughter of the girls, who regarded the expression of these views as a substantial portion of the entertainment they were all in duty bound to provide.

Meanwhile Hartly himself lived wholly

in accordance with present certainties, and never allowed future contingencies to annoy him in the least. Without being absolutely deficient in principle, he was, as may be supposed, morally insecure; and if he had not frequently fallen from grace, it was owing rather to his phlegmatic, emotionless temperament than to the exercise of self-control.

But Marion was not phlegmatic, and her imagination was exceedingly vivid. Her long subjection to her father's easy and convenient discipline had naturally failed to engender in her character either strength of will or fixity of purpose. Her conscience had never been cultivated into that fineness of perception and sensitiveness that it might have acquired under a different educational influence and in a higher sort of environment, and hitherto self-reproach had been to her something very imperfectly felt.

Between Marion and her father an intimate relationship had always existed. Where

Emily was ashamed of him, the younger daughter experienced a profound pity. In many respects her nature closely resembled his own, and her personal hardships led her to deplore the wretched straits to which he was constantly put. She admired, too, his cleverness, his originality, his buoyant spirits. Nobody had ever yet seen Richard Hartly depressed, or exhibiting any traces of anxiety at the petty cares of existence. When Saturday night came round, and the necessary funds to meet his board bill were lacking, he was always equal to the emergency. The rose-wood sofa, upholstered in olive-green plush, which was one of the few remnants of his former grandeur that he had been able to keep, was cheerfully despatched to the obliging Jew around the corner, and as calmly received again when he could redeem it. The periodical disappearance and subsequent reappearance of this sofa was a source of never-failing interest and amusement to the inmates of the house and the

neighbors opposite, who stood grinning at the windows as it was moved in and out.

And then those wonderful evening parties! the monthly receptions, when a horde of wild-eyed, soulful Bohemians took possession of his quarters and ate ravenously the cake and sandwiches he had purchased on credit, strewing crumbs over the floor while they discussed art and literature, and gave representations of their individual skill! No wonder Charles Carter had objected in strong language. Even Marion was often shocked at the unblushing temerity of this crowd of parasites, and once or twice Philip had ventured a mild protest. But Mr. Hartly was obdurate. Why couldn't they let him alone? It was bad enough to lose all one's money when one's youth had passed. But to be deprived also of the companionship of his friends—those superior minds whose conversation was food, drink, and raiment—this certainly would be more than he could bear. Once he had asked for a little help—a mere

temporary loan with which to rebuild his fortune—and what had happened? He had been grossly insulted by a vulgar parvenu. Now, he wished it distinctly understood that never again would he hint at requiring assistance from man, woman, or child, never! At the same time, he cautioned them all to keep their silly opinions and rude criticisms to themselves. If they didn't choose to visit him, they might stay away, but he would brook no meddling interference with his amusements or his acquaintances.

Marion remembered the money her sister had given her, and, after leaving the dress-maker's, she resolved to call upon her father. It was close on to five o'clock when she turned her steps in the direction of Lexington Avenue. The sun had set, and the winter afternoon had settled into a uniform grayness. Some of the street-lamps were already lighted, and here and there a great glare of electricity lit up the snow-clad thoroughfare like a blaze of uncolored sunlight.

The house where Mr. Hartly had his rooms was a three-story brick dwelling, with dingy green shutters, and a balcony against whose brown scroll-work a naked vine flapped and scattered little showers of snow-flakes. As Marion rang the bell, the door was opened and a woman came out. She was middle-aged and dressed in shabby-genteel black. In one hand she carried a bundle of newspapers.

"Why, how do you do, Mrs. Latimer?" she said. "I suppose you've come to call on your pa. Well, he's at home. I needn't tell you, because you can hear the piano. He's composing something, I guess, because he's been at it all day."

"Well, I'm glad he's home. Where are you going so late, Miss Bertram? Teas?"

"Yes. I've got three on my list for to-day, and my copy must be at the office first thing in the morning. I declare it's drudgery—nothing but drudgery, pure and simple. Are you going to any teas or receptions this week?"

"No, indeed. I go out very little—hardly any, in fact; we can't afford it. It costs lots of money to go out in New York, even moderately."

"Well, I thought I'd ask you because I'm just dead-broke for news. If I don't get something startlingly fresh and original this week the editor of *Facts* will give me my walking papers, sure as fate. You know I'm working on *Facts* now. They pay niggardly prices, but beggars can't be choosers. At present I'm awfully hard up for news. To be sure, there are the teas to-day, but the people are not—well, they are not strictly fashionable, and the society editor told me yesterday he didn't want any more items about shoddy nobodies. He said he must have at least half a column of paragraphs about real swells for the next issue, and he intimated that I must get them by hook or by crook. I'm in a dreadful fix. Now, Mrs. Latimer, can't you give me a lift?" Her face suddenly brightened. "Why,

there's your sister, Mrs. Carter! She's no end of a swell, and she must be in her new house by this time. Tell me about the house. How is it furnished? Has she got a boudoir? What style is it? And what is the drawing-room like?"

Marion obligingly told her, adding: "What do you think, Miss Bertram! My sister is going to give a ball. She——"

"Wait, not quite so fast! For goodness sake, let me get my note-book. It was Providence that brought you here this afternoon to lift a poor wretch from the slough of despond." She drew out her note-book and began to write rapidly. "H'm—a ball. Now, when is it to be? Three weeks. Very good. And her gown? Rose colored tulle, eh? Charming—charming—and you—what shall you wear?"

Marion laughed. "I don't wonder at your asking that question in fear and trembling. But there is no cause for alarm. It won't be the old wedding dress, Miss Bertram.

You'll never be called upon to mention that again, I hope. No, I'm going to be very gorgeous. I shall be a symphony in black and gold."

"Perfect!" murmured Miss Bertram, nodding her head. "Now, be sure to look out for *Facts* next week. I'll describe the house and mention the ball in advance. That will settle the society editor, I guess. When I hand in my copy, I fancy he will stare. And then—— Oh, by the way, Mrs. Latimer, could you and would you get me an invitation to the ball? I will write such a lovely notice—a whole column. Of course you mustn't bother about it unless it is perfectly convenient, but I should love to go. I shouldn't wonder, too, if Mr. Martin—that's the society editor—raised my salary a bit if he found I was really getting in with the swells. That would be a great matter for me. You know my financial status isn't—well, it isn't exactly brilliant. I often go to bed saying to myself: 'Margaret Bertram,

where do you propose to get your dinner this day week unless fortune marks you for her own?' Yet somehow things always come out right in the end. Now, you will try to get the invitation, won't you?"

"Certainly. I will ask my sister, with pleasure."

"You dear thing! Well, I must be off. Remember me to your pa. I don't see him often, although we do live in the same house. I'm going to his reception next Friday. I always enjoy your pa's receptions. The absence of formality and ceremony is such a relief after the stiff entertainments I am forced to attend. Good-by! And don't forget about the ball."

Miss Bertram smiled as she lifted her skirts and picked her way down the snow-laden steps. Marion shut the door and moved along the gloomy hall, papered in pale brown panels with flashes of white moulding overhead. From the room on the right the sound of the piano echoed faintly. She

entered softly, discovering, somewhat to her surprise, that her father was not alone. Two voices abruptly stopped speaking as she came in. From the dim shadows at the far end of the apartment a couple of figures emerged into the light—one short and stout, the other tall, slender, aristocratic. Richard Hartly's florid face was wonderfully lighted by a pair of eyes which, though of a tender blue, shone with the metallic tints of steel. A white mustache drooped over his mouth and shaded a rather heavy chin. The whole striking countenance borrowed an air of distinction from the silky hair of a glistening whiteness that waved in loose masses over his forehead.

"Ah, Marion, my dear, how do you do?" he said, bending forward to kiss her. "Wayne," he added, addressing his companion, "this is my daughter, Mrs. Latimer. Marion, you see before you a great man—one whom I am proud to call my friend—Mr. Harold Wayne, the poet."

Both young people bowed and smiled. "I have heard of Mr. Wayne, of course," said Marion, pleasantly, but her father drew her away to the piano with the natural egotism of a "composer." He lighted a lamp, then taking his seat before the instrument, he ran his fingers lightly over the keys.

"Listen, both of you," he said, eagerly. "I want your opinion—mind, your honest opinion. I flatter myself this is rather good—unconventional, you know; only I shall change this C natural to C sharp. That will be a great improvement. Now, attention."

III.

IN the apartment-house a faint flicker of gas burned on the stairs from a stiff bracket on each landing, making ochreous spots amid the gloom. Marion shivered with cold as she mounted the steps rather more quickly than usual, reaching her rooms out of breath. She knew it must be very late. The streets already wore the garb of night. She went directly to the study, where Philip was writing beneath the orange glow of the student's lamp — a sturdy, determined figure with dark skin and hair, and a face wherein a singular intelligence and a certain rugged decisiveness were displayed. He did not move until she was close beside him. Then he threw the pen aside and glanced up brightly.

“Marion, where have you been? Why,

it's long past six. It's hardly safe for you to be out after dark, little woman."

"Yes, I know, Philip. The days are so horribly short. I went shopping with Emily, and I stopped to see papa on my way home." She paused, adding quickly, and with a subdued excitement that did not escape him: "Whom do you suppose I met there, at papa's? Oh, you will never guess, so I may as well tell you. It was Harold Wayne, the poet."

"Harold Wayne," he repeated. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "Well, I don't think you need be so proud of having made his acquaintance."

"Not proud? A man with such a reputation and with such talents! Why, Philip!"

"Reputation! Yes. I grant he has a reputation for sneering at everything other and better people hold sacred," said Philip, bitterly. "I know that he has written blasphemous books that are talked about,

and that in consequence he poses and attitudinizes in a way that disgusts every right-minded person. Of course, I am aware of all this."

Marion stood aghast at this outburst, but he continued, more gently: "As for his talents, that is a matter of taste. He has a fixed income of five thousand a year, and having nothing else to do, he amuses himself by writing indecent verses. That is about the whole of it."

Marion had removed her hat and jacket, and without replying she went into the bedroom to get ready for dinner. She wondered what had put Philip out of temper. He was generally so amiable and uncomplaining. Perhaps things had not gone smoothly at the office. He certainly labored under great disadvantages. He was like a man trying to fly with a girdle of heavy stones around his waist, that dragged him back to earth at every upward motion. It might be absolutely impossible for him to

succeed as a writer, while with a man like Harold Wayne success must be almost a foregone conclusion. But in any event she knew Wayne was very clever. She had never met anyone that impressed her so keenly with a sense of power and originality as did he. Nothing about him suggested the people one saw every day. He had a marked individuality. A strange feeling—half nervousness, half pleasure—had overcome her the moment his earnest, searching blue eyes met hers. He was handsome, distinguished, greatly sought after by women. She had heard of him often, she had read reviews of his poems in the papers. Some of the verses were frequently copied with flattering remarks and comparisons. Naturally Philip was prejudiced against him. Men—particularly literary men—always disliked those who were more fortunate than themselves—those who by means of superior talent rose higher than themselves in the world. She smiled

as she stood in front of the mirror and thought of the things Wayne had said. She recollected word for word his subtle criticism of her father's playing, his opinion of the new composition, his observations addressed to herself and imbued with a respectful admiration. Certainly she had enjoyed all this, and in the excitement of the moment she had spoken of her sister's ball, and promised to get him an invitation. Emily would be charmed to welcome this lion to her drawing-room. Charles would be enchanted. She could see him already in imagination strutting about amid the glare of light and the suffocating smell of the flowers, and saying to everybody, "Do you know who is here this evening? Harold Wayne, the poet." And how delightful it would be to dance with him! He would admire her blonde beauty enhanced by the black gown. They would sit and talk under one of the great palms in the conservatory, where the colored lanterns shed flecks

of brilliance on the plashing fountain. They would speak of his last book; he had told her he would send her a copy on the following day. Everybody was talking about this volume. It was the chief topic of conversation in the clubs, it was discussed in every drawing-room and boudoir; someone had said it was an immoral work, and that young girls were not allowed to read it. But this only added to her curiosity and strengthened her interest in the author.

She arranged her dress hurriedly as these varied reflections passed through her mind. Then in a few moments she rejoined Philip in the study. "Put away your work," she said, "dinner must be ready."

At that instant Sarah thrust her enormous head through the door, informing them that the evening meal was served.

The young man looked up pleasantly. All trace of his former petulance had vanished. He rose and stretched his tired arms above his head. "All right," he remarked

cheerfully as Sarah disappeared down the entry. Suddenly he struck a tragic attitude and began to declaim,

“ ’Tis the voice of the slugger, I heard her announce
Your dinner is ready, so on your soup pounce.”

“Only,” he added, relapsing into his ordinary genial tone, “I dare say we haven’t got any soup. Let us see what the slugger has provided.”

Marion forced a light laugh as they entered the stuffy dining-room where the table was laid—a dining-room with starched muslin drapery at the solitary window, and two chromo-lithographs on the wall. Sarah was just depositing a steaming dish of Irish stew at one end of the table, and having set it down with a thump she strode off to get the boiled potatoes.

“Soup! The idea of mentioning such a thing as soup,” began Marion, dolefully. “Soup-meat is an unknown quantity in this establishment, as you know very well,

Philip. I wonder what Mr. Wayne would say to this luxurious repast. When I know him better I shall invite him to dinner."

Philip's face darkened. "I hope you will never know him any better; I do not wish it," he replied, coldly. "He hasn't a good reputation where women are concerned. He is selfish to the core, and an unscrupulous brute besides. Why, I've heard stories I would not even repeat to you, and they are true stories. I know what he is. Wayne cares no more for a woman's honor than for his last season's clothes. Of course your father never stops to consider such matters, or if he did they would make but slight impression. So long as Wayne wrote grammatically and flavored his conversation with an occasional spicy epigram stolen from some Frenchman, your father would bow down and worship at his shrine. But the less you see of Wayne the better."

He spoke in a quiet way, yet with evident determination. Marion bit her lip, palpably

annoyed. She resented being treated like a child and coerced in this fashion, in addition to all her other miseries.

“Surely, Philip, you are talking in a very exaggerated strain,” she said, in a low, tremulous voice. “I am quite as able to judge people correctly as you are. I don’t see why you should make all this fuss simply because I have met Mr. Wayne and wish to treat him politely. You need not have any fear of our becoming friends, or even acquaintances. We are not likely to run across each other often. I am not in society.”

The last words were spoken churlishly. He glanced up to reply, but the reappearance of Sarah with a bottle of beer caused him to check the speech that rose to his lips. For a while he devoted himself to his dinner, eating hurriedly in great mouthfuls, and swallowing copious draughts of beer. Finally he said, leisurely: “I really object to your knowing Wayne, Marion. You are

young and inexperienced. He is a man of the world, experienced, unprincipled, and thoroughly bad. You do not understand these things, but I *know*."

The angry blood mounted again to his cheeks. Marion's eyes flashed, and a deep flush dyed her white face to the temples. "I believe you are jealous—jealous of a man you have never seen, and with whom I have exchanged a dozen sentences. Really it would be amusing, were it not so stupid."

"How do you know I have not seen him?" he asked, looking her squarely in the face.

"Then you have some special reason for all this? Why didn't you say so in the beginning? What is it you have against him? Come, let us hear the list of his crimes."

"I have already told you I would not repeat to you——"

"Nonsense; that is an easy way of getting out of it. what has he done—What?"

"You are childish and unreasonable," he

answered, more composedly. "You know that I am not jealous, and that I have merely your own welfare at heart. Why should we quarrel? Surely we have troubles enough without letting trifles like this make discord between us."

"It is you who are childish and unreasonable, Philip. You are annoyed at nothing. You insinuate all sorts of things against a man you do not know; and when I ask you to formulate some of these indirect charges, you do not answer. In addition, you lay down the law as if I were a baby without sense or discretion."

"Nothing of the sort. I simply say you must not know Harold Wayne. He is the type of man I do not choose my wife shall have for an associate, or even an acquaintance. However, let us drop the subject. As you said just now, you are not likely to meet him again. You will not be thrown together."

Marion was silent. A crimson spot burned

on either cheek. Her fingers trembled as she clasped her knife and fork. She was dimly oppressed by a sense of injury. She thought of the book Wayne had promised to send. She meant to have it and read it at any price. Then common politeness would necessitate an acknowledgment of his courtesy. She would be obliged to write a line and thank him—tell him what she admired in his work. And if he should request permission to call, what should she tell him? She could not refuse. She could not say—“my husband has a ridiculous prejudice against you.” Besides, there was the ball—the invitation she had told him Emily would send. Come what would, she determined he should go to the ball. He should have an opportunity to admire her as she was entitled to be admired. She made little effort to stifle the voice of conscience, that grew momentarily fainter. “I am not a baby to be ordered here and there, and told to whom I must speak and to whom I must not

speak," she thought. Philip's voice broke in upon her rebellious meditation. She could see he was making a strenuous attempt to address her in his usual manner.

"Well, where have you and Emily been to-day?" he inquired.

"I went to luncheon at the new house. They are quite settled now. The baby has been sick. That is why she did not come sooner to see me." Her momentary ill-temper appeared to have decreased. "The luncheon was splendid. Emily's *chef* is as good as Delmonico's. He is an artist. And she has two men in the dining-room, a butler, and a footman in livery."

"H'm! I wonder who designed the livery, Charles or Emily?" put in Philip, reflectively.

"Fancy, after all this magnificence, coming back here to Irish stew and the slugger!" continued Marion, pettishly. "And you have no idea how beautiful the house is. Emily suggested everything herself. And

as Charles gave her *carte blanche*, you may be sure she got the best to be had for money. It must be delightful to go round and buy things. I don't care what awful affliction might overtake me, I believe I could mitigate it by going out and buying things. I wonder if I shall ever again have any money to spend, Philip?"

She smiled a little mournfully as she uttered the last sentence.

"I hope so. Of course it all depends on my luck. I don't say on my ability or my energy, because these qualities have nothing to do with money-making proper. Chance—luck if you will—but ability! well, we won't talk about it. I feel myself getting discouraged, angry, impatient when I talk about it. I suppose I must wait and toil, that is all. Never mind! tell me what Emily's house is like. I must go over and take a look at it."

"You'll see it soon arrayed in all its glory, like Solomon. Emily is going to give a

ball, and we shall be honored with an invitation."

"Of course she will invite us, but how can we go! Frankly, my dear, your wedding-dress——"

"Oh, I've done with that, Philip. I'm going to turn it into a tea-gown—fix it up with beaded net or—or something."

"A tea-gown at a ball! Why, you must be crazy."

"How dull you are! the tea-gown will be for home. It will be so nice to put on in case anyone should call."

"Exactly. We are so overrun with visitors, are we not? Lines of carriages in front of the door every day—rows of footmen on the sidewalk—stairs crowded with elegant persons all coming to call on the Latimers," said Philip, with dry sarcasm. "Yes, I should think you would find a white satin tea-gown extremely useful. Just the thing." Then suddenly changing his tone, he added; "But what *do* you

propose to wear to Emily's ball, if I may ask? "

Marion folded her arms upon the table, looking round to see that Sarah was not present to overhear the confidence. "Emily has given me a lovely new gown. We went to Célestine's this afternoon to order it. It's to be black and gold. I shall look pretty in black and gold, because I am so white and blonde."

"Emily is a good sister to you, Marion," said Philip, earnestly.

Marion did not answer for a moment. "Well, yes," she said, finally, "I suppose most people would call her a good sister. Still, with her money she might do more for me than she actually does. She knows how straitened we are financially. I told her this morning about the bills and those awful packages—the 'declined-with-thanks' packages. She never offered me a dollar to pay anything, although she had a good hundred in her pocketbook. That's what I can't

understand about Emily. She'll give me frocks and hats and gloves, but never a penny to pay the bills. She did give me twenty dollars, but——”

Marion stopped short. She had just recollected the money that was still in her purse.

“Well, what about the twenty dollars?” Philip inquired, with interest.

“It was for papa, because I told her the sofa was gone and he is going to give a party on Friday evening. Emily was quite angry, and she spoke to Charles about it. Charles was at home for luncheon, and they never stopped talking about papa and abusing him, and before the servants too! Emily said his behavior was scandalous, and she insisted on my taking the money to him. Of course I knew he would not accept it. He wouldn't take a penny from Emily or Charles, if it was to save him from starvation. So——”

“Well, what is the matter? did you offer him the money?”

“Why, you see, Philip, I found Mr. Wayne there. To tell the truth, I forgot all about the twenty dollars. I—we—were so interested in papa’s playing. But even if I had remembered, I couldn’t have said anything before a stranger.”

“You can go back to-morrow and explain.”

“Yes, I suppose so. But I don’t see how I can make him take it. I was to tell him the money was my own. He will be sure to see through that very transparent deception.”

Philip shrugged his shoulders. “If he doesn’t take it you must return it to Emily, that is all.”

Marion sighed regretfully. “Of course. But I wish I could keep it. We could pay lots of little bills with twenty dollars.”

“Oh, I dare say something will turn up to help us along,” replied Philip, with an attempt at cheerfulness. “That thing I sent to *Dexter’s* ought to bring me in a good round sum. That is, if they accept it. I

ought to be hearing from them. They have had the manuscript for three weeks."

"And *I* have had it for two days," said Marion, briskly. She took a strange satisfaction in this rather brutal announcement. Some of the words he had uttered during the early part of the evening still lingered unpleasantly in her memory. It was not fair that she should bear everything. She could think of nothing just then except that he had annoyed her foolishly and without reason. She got up from the table as she spoke, and he followed her silently into the study.

"Wait a moment and I'll fetch it for you. It's done up beautifully in smooth brown paper. I wonder why we can never do up packages as they do." She knew every syllable she let fall from her lips cut him to the heart and filled him with a dull anger. She flitted into the bedroom and brought out the parcel. "Here it is!" she exclaimed, tossing it upon the table. "I suppose you ought to

be grateful that they did not send you a bill for storage."

He did not look at it. He was deeply hurt, and for a moment his eyes rested upon his wife with a sort of stupefied surprise. He turned toward the table where the decanter stood, and pouring out half a tumbler of brandy, drank it thirstily.

Marion began to expostulate. "Do you know that is the second bottle you have had this week, and it is dear?"

"I don't care," he answered, doggedly. "Let me alone."

He flung himself presently into the chair by the table and took up his pen. The name of Charles Lamb danced before his eyes. He wrote a few sentences in a trembling hand and then stopped. For a while he sat staring blankly at the opposite wall. He had counted on the acceptance of his story, and now—besides, why should Marion speak so heartlessly? He had been a fool to marry without money.

There was no making life bearable without money.

Marion got her sewing and sat beneath the lamp, plying her needle with more than usual diligence. The spot of crimson still burned on either cheek. She was conscious that the first serious disagreement of their married life had occurred between Philip and herself. Yet she felt like one who is no longer master of himself. Some blind destiny seemed to be leading her onward to a path she must tread independently of will, of conscience, of honor. A new interest had sprung up in her wearisome existence, and she said to herself that she would keep it with her at any cost.

IV.

ONE of those mild spring-like days that have come to be a feature of our winter season, broke with lingering tints of scarlet and purple over the city. The snow melted to slush ; the pavements were wet and streaked with mud. Down the brown walls of the houses little streams of water trickled slowly ; and Marion standing at the study window, watched them and yawned sleepily. She was in a more unsettled, morbid frame of mind than ever ; her thoughts, that before had dwelt principally in the past, now strove to penetrate the future with a sort of hopeful eagerness that received numerous rude shocks. She had hardly slept during the night. Through the feverish dreams that assailed her she heard Philip's reproachful voice intermingled with the sweeter one of

Harold Wayne. Then Sarah's brazen tones bawling to the butcher-boy resounded as the clamor of vibrant bells, drowned finally by flitting strains of Mr. Hartly's music. "Yes, that C sharp is a great improvement," she could hear him say. Gradually all these confused sounds ceased and she fancied herself sitting quite still in a beautiful room, with Wayne's blue eyes gazing into hers with the expression of gentle admiration she had remarked when she met him. She tossed and turned; waking at last only to fall again into a troubled doze and experience a repetition of the whole fantastic vision. Philip remarked her pallor at breakfast, and in a somewhat constrained accent inquired if she were ill. He had not altogether forgotten the scene of the previous evening, and he too was perplexed and gloomy. Marion scarcely answered when he spoke; and with an unusually heavy heart and tightly compressed lips, he went down town to his office.

For an hour she wandered from the bed-

room to the study and back again, like an evil spirit. She could not concentrate her attention upon anything. Her head ached and her eyes burned from want of sleep. Her hands were cold and clammy. She walked up and down until her legs shook from fatigue, then she dragged a chair close to the radiator and tried to warm herself. She was certainly ill. It flashed across her brain that perhaps her mental and physical condition might be the forerunner of a serious malady that would eventually result in death. The idea of dying in her youth, before the full opportunity for enjoyment had come, thrilled her with a horrible mis-giving. Tears of self-pity rose unbidden to her eyes. She leaned her throbbing head upon her hands and tried to imagine herself dead and in her coffin—a long black-draped box standing in the artificial dusk of the study. Candles would burn dimly and the air would be heavy with the rich scent of tuberoses. Her father and Philip would

steal in with bowed heads and place sweet-smelling flowers on her breast and in her clasped waxen hands. Then Emily and Charles would come. She could see Charles dressed in a fresh suit of clothes, his face wearing the same self-satisfied, consequential air that it took on habitually, and his mind engrossed with the cheapness of everything. He would stare haughtily at his father-in-law, and assume a pompous demeanor while the burial service was being read, regarding his reflection in the mirror to be sure his attitude was quite correct. She fancied she could hear the muffled footfalls, and see the undertaker moving about, giving directions, and smoothing his black gloves. Presently she laughed, remembering how ridiculously narrow the front door was, and what a time they would have getting the coffin in and out. They would be obliged to tip it up sideways.

"Please, 'm," broke in Sarah's voice, shrilly, "the milkman has called to collect

the bill, and he says he can't serve you no more unless he's paid this minute."

Marion started and raised her head, half-bewildered.

"He says—what?" she asked.

Sarah repeated the message, grinning at her mistress's evident discomfiture, and sprawling against the door so that her grimy thumbs made gray spots upon the paint.

"Very well, I will see," said Marion, mechanically. She rose and advanced toward the bed-room, where she suddenly paused. "What am I going for?" she reflected. "I have no money. How can I pay this horrible man?" She stood for an instant in the middle of the floor, with both hands folded and a strained look in her eyes. "I can't pay him," she said again. "What is the use of this pretence?" All at once a thought occurred to her, filling her with disgust and loathing, yet seeming to force its way into her brain like a coal of living fire. She leaned up-

on the table, hesitating. "No," she said, shuddering, "that would be too low, too cowardly." Then she made an effort to summon courage. "Why not?" she asked herself. "Why not?" her heart began to beat violently and her head grew dizzy. It was but a step from the table to the bureau, yet her knees trembled and her hands quivered with the exertion of walking. She pulled the drawer open and groped about among the hairpins and handkerchiefs for her purse. Yes, there it was; and in it was the money Emily had given her, folded just as she had left it the day before. She knew her father would never take it. He would starve sooner. And Emily did not need it. She already had more than she could spend. "Why should it be wrong? It cannot be wrong," she said to herself. "He would never accept it, so I am depriving him of nothing—and this life is making me desperate."

"The man is waiting, ma'am?" called

Sarah from the study, thinking she had forgotten.

"Tell him I will come in a moment," Marion replied, faintly. It was too late now to draw back, even had she wished to do so. She had committed herself irrevocably. Hastily she drew the money from the purse, starting back in affright as she saw her features mirrored in the polished surface of the glass. "I am frightfully nervous," she thought, trying to force a smile. "I am doing no wrong to anybody." She closed the drawer loudly and returned to the study, walking erect and speaking firmly. "Where is the bill? I cannot find the bill," she exclaimed to Sarah, who was still waiting and clutching the door.

"The man has the bill, ma'am. He will receipt it."

Marion gave Sarah the money, trying to appear properly dignified and turning away her head, that the servant might not note the fixed look in her eyes. Sarah tramped

heavily down the entry to the kitchen, where she shouted to the milkman — “Here’s your money. Give me the receipt, and be quick about it.”

“Step lively, eh? as the brakeman remarks in the elevated trains when the cars are packed to the roof and folks wedged in so tight they can’t breathe,” observed the milkman, in a high good humor at the sight of the twenty-dollar bill. Then two loud guffaws of laughter reverberated through the passage.

A sort of numbness crept over Marion. She felt like a person under the influence of a potent opiate. She leaned against the window, sick and agitated. In a room opposite she could discern the tall figure of a girl standing in front of a mirror and pinning up her skirts. “She is going out and doesn’t want to get her petticoats muddy. The streets must be filthy,” Marion mused, languidly. The door was pushed open again and Sarah returned with the receipted

bill, black with finger prints. There was some change, too, that she placed upon the table noisily. Marion did not move. When after a while she turned her face to the room, her head was swimming and red spots danced before her eyes. She almost staggered. "I am actually ill. I must take something," she thought. Her indistinct gaze roamed about the apartment vaguely. "I think I will taste the brandy. It will pull me together. Philip says it is very good when one is faint and weak. I don't know what can be the matter with me. I was never like this before." Her fingers shook so that she could hardly grasp the bottle. But she poured some of the brandy into a tumbler, and drank it, raw. It burned her throat and made her eyes water. For a moment a deathly nausea overcame her. However the disagreeable sensation quickly passed, to give way to a warm, pleasant glow that stole through her veins from head to foot. She was no longer cold or nervous, and she was

glad she had taken Emily's money to pay the milkman. "Thank heaven, that is off my mind!" she said, half aloud. She sat down beside Philip's table and picked up the morning paper. It was replete with sensational articles heralded by blatant headlines.

She read one thing and another, seeing Harold Wayne's countenance constantly start out from between the closely printed columns. In the distance, Sarah was singing her usual hymn, and in a moment the doorbell rang sharply. Marion put down the paper automatically. Of course somebody had brought another bill. Well, it did not matter much. There was some money left. Certainly it must be a bill, because there were no more manuscripts to be returned. The story sent to *Dexter's* had been the last. It must be a bill, and mechanically her eyes shifted to the change—a pile of silver with two crumpled bank notes beneath it. But when Sarah tramped in once more, Marion's

face flushed and brightened. It was not a bill that was brought, nor anything that resembled a rejected manuscript. On the contrary, it was a dainty parcel wrapped in white tissue paper, and tied with pale pink ribbons. A note written on fine paper lay folded amid the wrapping. Marion somehow divined at once the contents of the package, and again her senses became clouded.

"Is there any answer, ma'am? the messenger is waiting," said Sarah, lingering with an expression of greedy curiosity.

"If there is an answer I will send it later. Put the parcel down there. Your hands are too dirty to touch anything."

Sarah bridled angrily, muttering as she went out something about not being able to play cook and lady's maid both. But Marion took no notice. Her hands were busy with the ribbon and the square, mauve-tinted note. A faint odor of orris greeted her nostrils as she broke the seal and read:

“DEAR MRS. LATIMER: I trust you will do me the honor to read my poems; and if it should please you to bestow upon them any criticism, I should be more than happy, besides owing you a debt of gratitude.

“May I not hope also to have the pleasure of seeing you again soon? Faithfully yours,

“HAROLD WAYNE.”

Marion glanced over the words hurriedly, without fully comprehending them. Afterward she read them again more slowly. A charmed feeling of gratified vanity possessed her. Here was a man whom she had seen but once and in the most casual manner. He was universally recognized as one of the rising geniuses of the day. And this superb creature had deigned to bestow upon her—a nobody—his attention and his most flattering sentiments of regard. She started up with the note held firmly in her hands. Her face was flushed with excitement, and all her former physical weakness vanished. The

hideous incident that had preceded the arrival of the book, and which for the time being had made her turn with absolute horror from intimate contemplation of herself, now passed completely from her recollection, buried as it were beneath the intensity of this sudden joy, like a poisonous weed hidden from sight by a sudden shower of rose petals. She picked up the book eagerly, and began to turn over the pages. A sonnet addressed to some woman caught her eye. She read it once—twice, wondering if the person to whom it was dedicated were real or imaginary. The words were brimming with passion—they spoke eloquently of the frail spirit held in bondage by the fiercer dictates of the flesh. She tried to fancy how he had looked when he wrote them. Philip's unfinished essay met her gaze, and her lip curled. Why could not he write like Harold Wayne? Why wasn't he a successful author instead of a common literary hack, eternally doomed to scribble editorials about

the tariff? She had supposed he had great talents when she married him. Her father had said so, and naturally she believed him. Evidently, however, Philip had no talents. He would never succeed—it wasn't in him. With her beauty she might have married anybody. She might have had a rich man like Charles. She could have cut a dash in society. A sudden passionate revolt overcame her. Her pent-up dissatisfaction resolved itself in a burst of wild anger. She tossed Philip's papers aside, scattering the sheets far and wide. Had she dared, she would have torn them to atoms. It gave her a curious sensation of pleasure to think how furious he would be if he knew about the note and the poems. But she did not intend that he should know. The idea of having a secret was morbidly agreeable to her. She carried the book presently into the bedroom. She glanced at several of the sonnets, then, with a delicious sense of guilt, she thrust the volume into the bureau drawer.

The ribbon she folded carefully. There were at least two yards, and she meant to make bows of it to put on her night-dress. As for the note, it must be answered, of course. She was impatient to answer it; so she re-entered the study to look for a sheet of paper. When she found it she was forcibly reminded of its cheap and inferior quality. It also smelt of tobacco. Philip's cigarettes had been lying beside it in the drawer. She recalled the delicate scent of orris on Wayne's note, and she decided she could not send him a reply impregnated with tobacco. The effect of the brandy she had drunk still lingered pleasantly. A mild languor was in her blood and mounted to her head. She wondered how she could get the smell out of the paper, and she sat absently staring and playing with Philip's pen. An idea occurred to her all at once. She fetched the cologne bottle from the dressing-table, and rubbed the four white pages with the tip of her finger that she had dipped into the liquid. The alcohol

evaporated quickly, leaving behind a sickly perfume. She inhaled it composedly, and smiled at her cleverness in having thought of so ingenious a device. In a moment she wrote hurriedly :

“DEAR MR. WAYNE: A thousand thanks for the poems; I have spent the entire morning in reading them, with how much delight I shall leave you to guess. I should be most happy to see you, if you will call any afternoon between three and five.

“Sincerely yours,

“MARION LATIMER.”

She read it over before sealing the envelope and writing the address. “I will mail it myself,” she thought. “I won’t trust it to Sarah. Then I will lunch with Emily and ask for the invitation.”

She ran into the dining-room to see what time it was. The ugly little gilt clock, flanked on either side by a pair of still uglier

porcelain vases, marked the hour of noon. She dressed for the street leisurely and deliberately. Her mind was more at rest than it had been for many a day. Before going out she paused to put the remainder of Emily's money into her purse. There was something over five dollars left, quite enough to buy what she required to make the wedding-dress into a tea-gown. She reflected upon the pattern. It ought to be some creamy-white stuff, thin, and starred with crystal. She took the dress out of the closet, and spreading it upon the bed, measured the bodice with her finger to see how many yards she would have to get, and calculating the cost. The dress had been a present from Emily. How out of place it looked in this horrible room ! Well, that could not be helped. But certainly the frock would make a lovely tea-gown, and she meant to alter it at once, so as to have it ready in case Mr. Wayne should call.

Whew, how intolerably hot it was in the

study ! That was always the trouble with steam. There was no regulating it. One must either freeze or be cooked outright. She got down on the floor and turned off the heat. The action sent the blood to her face and made her head swim with vertigo. She descended the long flights of stairs to the street and walked on tiptoe through the mud to the letter-box at the corner, and mailed the note. A blissful sense of joy shot through her as she saw it disappear. Somehow the change, the break in her existence, for which she had confidently longed without positively daring to expect, had come almost without warning. From the depths of her obscured reason she thought she must follow out the bent of her inclinations, no matter whither they might lead her. Why, indeed, should she not live and enjoy as others lived and enjoyed ? Had she been created merely to be denied everything her soul craved ? She could not, would not believe aught so monstrous.

True, she had no clear idea of what might happen. She did not reflect upon the immense significance of the proverbial first step. But she possessed nevertheless a firm, indomitable faith in her purely feminine ability to improve her material condition. Once, as she meditated, Philip's face, worn, tired, reproachful, rose up before her and she hesitated, yet only for a second.

"I am doing him no wrong," she murmured. "I am hurting no one." Thus she strove to quiet her conscience.

Charles generally came home to luncheon nowadays, and he and Emily were already seated at table when Marion entered, feeling wonderfully refreshed by her brisk walk. Charles was a big man, of rather coarse and exaggerated proportions. His pale-gray eyes and heavy blond mustache were quite in keeping with his air of pompous, well-fed ease. He leaned back in his magnificent antique chair in the long, solemn dining-room, composedly surveying the wood carvings,

the masses of plate on the sideboard, the superb frescoes, and appearing to regard the entire universe with a smile of benign patronage. To him all this luxury represented merely so much money. Of art in itself he had not the smallest conception, and he valued his possessions exactly in proportion to what they had individually cost him. No one could look at him and not perceive how greatly he was overburdened by an acute sense of his own importance, and he took good care to impress the fact upon everybody. Emily, in a gorgeous wrapper of sea-green plush, faced him at the table; and in her weaker personality was reflected a slight portion of her husband's inflated pretension.

"I am glad you came, Marion," she began, as the footman, grim and stately, presenting a faint resemblance to his master, placed another chair at the table. "We have been discussing the ball, and as usual, Charles wants to have everything his own way. I should like to get some very unique favors

for the cotillion ; but Charles, while he is willing to spend thousands on the supper and decorations, wants to economize in the favors. I say he can't economize. Everything ought to harmonize. He seems to think anything will do for favors."

"Flowers are good enough and dear enough," replied Charles, carving a partridge. "Why aren't flowers good enough?"

"Oh, well, you know, Charles, this is our first big entertainment, and naturally I want it to be a success," remarked Emily, plaintively. "You can't be expected to understand, because you have never gone into society. But I am sure Marion will say I am right."

"Marion ! what should Marion know about it ? does *she* go into society ? Why don't you send for your father and ask him ?" Charles began to laugh, picking his bread to pieces and strewing the crumbs over the table-cloth. Emily gave him a warning glance, indicating that the footman was listening to the con-

versation, but Charles continued to laugh, shaking from head to foot and repeating, "What does Marion know about it?" as if the idea was exquisitely humorous. Marion flushed and answered, irritably:

"It's all very well for you to laugh, but when it comes to a knowledge of social matters, I fancy papa knows as much as you do. You may be a good business man, Charles—nobody denies that—still you've never gone into society."

"What is the use of personal illustrations?" objected Emily. "They won't help us to decide about the favors?"

Charles sat up and began to stammer and splutter angrily: "I've never cared to go into society until lately. Now that I feel like going, I imagine I can pick and choose. I should like to see the people that would hesitate to receive me. Yes, I should just like to see them."

All three commenced talking in concert, and for a moment nothing could be heard

except a confused jumble of words. The footman slipped away to the pantry, where he and the butler stuffed napkins into their mouths to stifle the sounds of the mirth in which they found themselves compelled to indulge. At last Emily took advantage of a slight pause to make herself heard.

“What does it matter one way or the other? Everybody has to begin at one time or another to make a position. I wish you would talk about the favors. Why can’t I buy what I please? a thousand dollars more or less will not make any difference to you, Charles.”

“Oh, I don’t care. Fix it any way you choose,” he grumbled, still sulky from what he considered Marion’s rudeness. He resolved to tell Emily later in the day that he would not put up with such remarks from her sister, and that he was prepared to deal with Marion precisely as he had with Mr. Hartly unless she showed more respect for his superior position. Really it must be

confessed his wife's relations were no credit to anybody. Marion was pretty and Emily was fond of her, but she had no manners. Charles was always harping on the subject of manners. He often sat in the nursery and lectured the baby, quoting paragraphs from Lord Chesterfield's letters, as for instance ; "now, baby dear, recollect when you grow up to be a man that you must never laugh aloud. A true gentleman contents himself with allowing no more than a faint smile to cross his lips." No, Marion was woefully deficient in elegance of manner. It all came, he supposed, from marrying a pauper. He glanced round presently and missed the footman from behind the chair, and his face grew purple. "Here, you Thomas !" he shouted, "where the deuce are you ?"

Thomas emerged from the pantry, stiff as a ramrod, and with a perfectly expressionless countenance.

"Yes, sir."

"Now, Thomas what are you doing in the

pantry? It's your business to stand right here behind my chair. Do you understand? I declare it's most extraordinary! You engage servants from the very best houses in town, yet they are absolutely ignorant of their duties. I can't imagine how people live. You ought to know, Thomas, that in really fine families no footman ever goes into the pantry during a meal. You might as well go and sit in the bath-room. Do you hear, Thomas? You might just as well go up-stairs and sit in the bath-room."

"Yes, sir."

"Very well, then, don't do it again," growled Charles, vaguely, as he gulped down a glass of Burgundy. Presently he assumed a consequential air and turned to Marion. "The trouble with most people is that they have such atrocious manners. You meet, for example, a man who is born a gentleman. Naturally you expect him to behave like a gentleman, but very often he acts like a pig. A man dined here last evening and I got out

my finest Romanée for his benefit. Why, the money I paid for that Romanée would keep a family in comfort for a whole year; but when he had tasted it what do you suppose he said? Well, he remarked that it wasn't half so musty as he had expected to find it. I don't know what you call that sort of talk, but *I* call it damned impertinence. That man, too, is a poor man. He's got a pedigree, but not a dollar to bless himself with. I don't believe he tastes Burgundy twice a year, and when he does, somebody else pays for it."

Charles rose from the table, flinging his napkin in a heap upon the chair, whence Thomas gravely removed it. "Well, I'm going down town again to work like a nigger. There isn't a man in the street, not one, who slaves the way I do. But I tell you I'll have another clean million by this time next year. A clean million."

He thrust both hands into his pockets and stalked out without leave-taking. In

a moment the front door closed behind him with a bang that shook the house.

"Charles is growing dreadfully nervous," observed Emily, knitting her white brows. "He is like that all the time now. I think he is suffering from over-work."

Marion did not answer. She played a little with her fork, waiting anxiously for Emily to mention her father and inquire about the money. She had prepared herself for the question and intended to say that he had been induced to accept it. But Emily, whose mind was filled with other matters, made no reference either to Mr. Hartly or the money. She got up in a few moments and led the way to her boudoir, where a bright wood fire was burning. Marion sank into an easy chair before the hearth and spoke rapidly of Miss Bertram and *Facts*, laughing and adding as an after-thought, "Oh, by the way, I have met a celebrity, a real celebrity, and I want you to invite him. Are you listening, Emily?"

"Who is it, dear?" Emily asked, lolling on the sofa and yawning.

"It is Mr. Wayne, the poet. You've heard of Harold Wayne?"

Emily sat up in amazement. "What! the man who writes such dreadful things, and who is always getting into a scrape with some woman?"

"I don't know, I suppose so," Marion replied, a trifle irritably. "You should not depend upon gossip. He is very handsome and enormously clever, and—and he has a great reputation. He goes everywhere."

"Oh, yes, I dare say. Where did you meet him, dear?"

"At father's." Marion turned her face away, as if the heat from the fire was too great. But Mrs. Carter, after a pause, merely said, "Well, that's strange. I mean it is rather unusual for papa to pick up anyone who is decent. I wonder how he managed it."

"I didn't have a chance to ask. But Mr.

Wayne is really charming. He has been very polite too, and sent me his poems. I want you to invite him."

"Oh, I will invite him with pleasure. He is a fashionable sensation just now, and Charles will be delighted to have him come."

"There's something else I want to say, Emily." Marion stopped, continuing, finally, "For some reason Philip objects to Mr. Wayne. He—in fact——"

"He is jealous of his success?"

"I don't know. But he was terribly put out when he heard that I knew him. He talked—oh, you have no idea of the things he said. Naturally, if Philip thought I had asked you to invite Mr. Wayne, he would be furious. Of course there is no reason why I shouldn't know him—I am sure there is none. But men are so unreasonable. Philip seems to think I am a child."

"Well?"

"Nothing—only I don't want you to tell Philip I asked you. You must pretend that

Mr. Wayne is a friend of yours, that is all."

Mrs. Carter burst into an amused laugh. "Yes," she answered, "I understand perfectly."

V.

MARION worked desperately at the tea-gown, never pausing until the last stitch was put in, and she had tried on the dress to see if it became her. Then with a sudden feeling of revulsion she concluded that so elegant a costume was ridiculously out of place in her shabby surroundings, and she thrust it half-angrily into the closet. "He would only think me vulgar if I wore it," she reflected.

She was hoping Wayne might call that afternoon, therefore she did not go out. She sat in the study reading a novel translated from the French. Many times she let the volume fall into her lap, thinking she heard the acute tinkle of the door-bell, but the afternoon wore slowly away and no one came to disturb her solitude. She grew rest-

less and annoyed as the hours passed. She turned over the pages of the book feverishly without taking in the meaning of a single sentence, her eyes occasionally scanning the odious wall-paper and the stiff upholstery. By six o'clock she was thoroughly out of temper. Philip regarded her anxiously, unable to understand what had come over her. They said little to each other during the evening. He sat up late to finish his essay, and he did not go to bed until he had folded and addressed it to the editor of a prominent magazine. Marion was already asleep when he came in to undress. The light from the chandelier glinted over her figure, showing in long shadowy lines beneath the covers. In spite of himself he sighed as he looked at her.

On the following day she waited again for Wayne to come, and again she spent the entire afternoon alone. At last Friday dawned and she recollected that her father's reception was to take place on that evening and

that perhaps she might meet Wayne there. She had not intended going. She seldom went to Mr. Hartly's unique entertainments nowadays, because Philip rarely cared to make the effort. But she determined that she would go on this occasion. She must go. After dinner she broached the subject diffidently. "Philip, this is papa's evening. I think we had better go."

"Nonsense. I haven't time. Besides, I am too tired to dress and go out."

"But I fancy he will expect us. It is so long since we have been. And you are not working much now that your essay is done. A little relaxation and amusement will do you good."

"Now, Marion, you don't call your father's parties 'relaxation and amusement,' I hope. They are an infernal bore, and the people are disgraceful. I like clever society well enough, but I have always struggled to keep out of that special coterie, that clique of third-rate writers and beer-garden vocalists.

I don't want to talk to them and I won't. But I'll take you there if you like, and then I'll go off and play a game of billiards."

"Yes, that will do. I don't care to go myself, but I suppose I must," she replied, secretly overjoyed at the thought of finding herself with Wayne unhampered by Philip's presence.

The night was raw and bleak. Marion, wearing a plain dark cloth jacket, shivered in the street-car, that smelt horribly of kerosene, and she wished impatiently that she could afford a cab. One of these days she meant to have a coupé of her own like Emily's—a coupé lined with scarlet satin and with two men on the box.

At the entrance to the Lexington Avenue boarding-house Philip left her, saying he would return at eleven. Marion ran briskly up the steps and rang the bell. Two wide bars of light streamed from below the partly raised blinds across the wooden balcony, and the sound of voices greeted her as she

stepped into the hall and removed her hat and jacket. The hall was filled with wraps of all sorts. Mounds of coats were piled upon the floor. Limp garments hung over the banisters. Hats and overshoes stood in rows on the steps of the staircase. Shrieks of laughter were heard from within as she opened the parlor door. Her father was talking to a pale young man, and both stood beside the piano apart from the rest. A tall brass lamp with a shade like a Japanese umbrella, shed a blond glow upon Mr. Hartly's white hair. The company was divided into groups, scattered throughout the long room. Marion's quick eyes eagerly travelled from face to face, seeking Wayne. But he was not present. Perhaps he would come later. In the corner usually occupied by the sofa was a table loaded with sandwiches, plates, and glasses; and from the centre a conical spire of ice rose above the ruby-colored crystal of the lemonade bowl. Several people came forward to meet her, among them

her father and Miss Bertram. "So you have decided to honor us this evening? That's right, my dear," cried Mr. Hartly, giving her a paternal pat on the shoulder. "You'll find some delightful people here. I can't stop to talk because I'm in the midst of a serious argument with Harrison. Harrison is tremendously clever, and recites like an angel. You shall hear him by and by. We are discussing Delsarte."

He bustled away toward the pale young man, who had remained standing near the piano. Miss Bertram motioned Marion to a seat, taking a place beside her.

"My dear, have you read *Facts*, to-day's issue? No? Well, you must get it. There's a full description of your sister's house, and of course I announced the ball. I wish you could have seen the Society Editor's face when I handed in my copy." Miss Bertram smoothed her old-fashioned lavender silk skirt, flounced up to the waist. She wore black lace mitts that she constantly pulled up

on her long, thin arms. The gaslight struck a topaz brooch that fastened her collar, and spread a yellow reflection over her sinewy throat. "There's an awful paragraph in *Facts*. The paper will be sued for libel as sure as I am sitting on this chair. It's about Mrs. Stone. You know the Stones? Her name isn't mentioned exactly. She's put in as Mrs. Rock. Ha, ha! Not bad that! Naturally, everybody will know who is meant. Well, it seems her husband went to a man's dinner one evening last week, leaving madam at home. She has always been considered the pink of propriety. She has the reputation of being tremendously pious, and she makes it a point not to receive men in Mr. Stone's absence. Unfortunately, he suffers from weak heart or something. Anyway, he was attacked by sudden faintness and vertigo while at the dinner; so he called a cab and was driven home. There was no light in the drawing-room, and he walked softly up-stairs to his wife's boudoir, think-

ing he would surprise her at her evening devotions. He did surprise her, my dear; and in whose company do you suppose? The footman's—yes, actually the footman's. She was sitting on the sofa beside him, and they were both drinking champagne. Fancy such a horrible discovery! Mr. Stone pitched the fellow down-stairs after smashing the champagne bottle over his head. They say the man is in the hospital, half dead. The next day Stone applied for a divorce, and I imagine he will get it without much difficulty. How the affair leaked out nobody knows; perhaps it never happened at all. Made up in the office, most likely, but it's all in *Facts*. Every detail is given. Oh, it's the richest thing you ever read."

Marion joined in Miss Bertram's laugh, struggling to overcome the nervousness that had taken possession of her. She watched the door, expecting every instant to see Wayne's commanding figure enter. She thought the company worse than usual.

Some of the men wore satin cravats, others were in frock-coats. The women were either old or vulgar. "Here comes the colonel to talk to us!" exclaimed Miss Bertram, delightedly. "Get a chair, Colonel, and make yourself comfortable."

The colonel enjoyed the proud distinction of being the landlady's husband. She had been a widow with some money and good business qualifications when she met and married him. She had kept the boarding-house for years, and the colonel simply walked into it and proceeded to make himself at home. Both were of German birth. Mrs. von Spitzenheim was a great obese woman, always working, hardly ever out of the kitchen—a mass of perpetually perspiring adipose tissue. The colonel was a gentleman of leisure. In marrying the widow he had given her to understand that a person of his exalted lineage—a man who had won military honors in the Franco-Prussian war—was not going to demean himself by work-

ing for a living. He had not a penny, it was true, but then his wife had long been accustomed to the drudgery of earning a livelihood, and she might continue as she had begun. He would give her an aristocratic name, and she would provide him liberally with money. He dressed elegantly, and while Mrs. von Spitzenheim cooked, and washed dishes, and screamed at the servants, he paraded Fifth Avenue, frequented the race course, and passed for a man of position. His wife liked to talk about his beauty, his talent, his splendid family connections ; and as she ladled out the raisin soup at dinner she was wont to discuss the colonel's cousin, who was a count and owned an estate in Germany worth nobody knew how much.

The colonel himself was big and soldierly, and at least ten years his wife's junior. She rarely attended Mr. Hartly's "evenings," for the simple reason that she was generally busy helping to "wash up." In response to Miss Bertram's invitation, the

colonel sat down and began to twist his military mustache. He spoke English admirably, with the faintest trace of foreign accent.

“Do you see that man with the enormous nose?” he asked. “He’s an actor with an original method. A little while ago he recited Poe’s ‘Bells.’ I declare, the way he yelled when he came to the ‘brazen bells’ was something too awful. And when he did the ‘tinkle, tinkle’ business everybody giggled. Now he is as mad as a hornet, and won’t speak.”

“Oh, yes, I heard him,” and Miss Bertram laughed convulsively at the recollection, tugging at her mitts; “you should have come ten minutes earlier, Mrs. Latimer. It was really too funny. Enough to make Poe turn in his grave. Now, Colonel, I want you to give me a paragraph for next week’s *Facts*—something amusing. I haven’t enough stuff to make half a column, and they pay such niggardly prices! Half a column won’t do me

for wash-money. My laundress is expensive."

"Well, I'll give you a joke. I made it up myself. It's purely original. Do you remember that dreadful newspaper scandal—the Crandell affair? Mrs. Crandell, it was stated, beat her husband black and blue with the hair-brush, then in her fury tore off his night-shirt, leaving him—well, you understand how."

Miss Bertram put up her fan to conceal an imaginary blush. The colonel broke into uproarious laughter. "Just wait till I've finished; you'll roar! I happen to know Crandell, and I met him the other day at the baseball grounds. He told me the night-shirt story. 'It's all true,' he says—'every word of it.' When he had related it he struck an attitude and cried, tragically: 'After that, you comprehend, I shall never again consent to see the woman who bears my name!' 'My dear fellow,' said I, 'you mean the woman who bares your body.' Ha,

ha ! that was pretty good for an impromptu, wasn't it ? Now I'll make you a present of it ; I'll give it to you for nothing." His voice was lost in suffocating mirth. Miss Bertram lay back in her chair panting, and gasping, her face was crimson, and tears stood in her eyes. Marion joined in the hilarity. The colonel shouted. "The idea," he spluttered, finally, "of talking about bearing his *name*—his name indeed, when she had literally torn his night-shirt into shreds and left him standing in the middle of the floor—without—without——"

"Oh, for goodness' sake, don't tell me any more or I shall expire !" said Miss Bertram, holding her sides. But the colonel wiped his eyes and continued. "I woke up in the middle of the night and thought of it, and I began to laugh so that I nearly shook the slats out of the bed." He burst forth afresh, speaking in detached gasps. "Mrs. von Spitzenheim—she woke up too—the bed was shaking—she thought it was an earthquake

—she gave one yell——” The colonel’s voice was drowned completely. He pressed both hands upon his waist as if he feared some buttons would break from their fastenings. Miss Bertram rocked back and forth.

“Oh, I’ll fix that up for *Facts*. It is magnificent. You look in *Facts* next week, and you will see it. The editor will think I invented it. I shall tell him I invented it.”

Too much exhausted to continue the conversation immediately after this outburst, yet every now and then laughing afresh as they recalled the cause, the colonel and Miss Bertram sat for a while in silence. Marion had been entertained by the colonel’s anecdote, but her disappointment at not seeing Wayne was so intense that her self-possession momentarily forsook her. It was impossible for her to talk. A flush had risen to her pale cheeks. She bit her lip, and tapped impatiently with one foot upon the floor. Presently Mr. Hartly stepped forward and, after silencing the clamor by a loud, imperious “Hush!” announced that Mr. Rhodes, the cel-

celebrated comic vocalist, had kindly consented to sing. Mr. Rhodes was short and thick-set. He had red hair and a smooth-shaven face. He tripped lightly to the piano and handed his music to Mr. Hartly, who was to play the accompaniment. "Now go ahead, my boy, and don't be bashful," exclaimed the genial host, running his fingers lightly over the keys and shaking his bushy silver-tinted locks. Mr. Rhodes smiled, bowed, and began his song "I'm such a simple man," suiting the words to proper gestures and once in a while kicking out his right leg and winking in a droll manner that amused his listeners exceedingly. Then he was encored, and gave an imitation of barn-yard noises, crowing like a cock, bleating like a lamb, grunting like a hog, all this interspersed between the lines of a sentimental ballad. Everybody laughed and applauded, but Marion thought the whole thing intolerable. This semi-abandoned company sickened her. She would not have minded them if Wayne had been there to talk to her. She longed to hear the clock strike eleven so

that she might go home. Smarting with chagrin and burdened with uncertainty she felt compelled to question Miss Bertram.

“Does Mr. Wayne never come here? I found him with papa the other afternoon. I thought perhaps he would be here to-night. He is very interesting.”

“What, Wayne, the poet? Bless your heart, no! I never saw him at any of your pa’s evenings. I didn’t know your pa was acquainted with him. I fancy Wayne only cares to go to swell places. We’re too Bohemian here to suit him. The colonel is the only elegant gentleman seen at these jolly gatherings. Isn’t that so, colonel? Now just look at his hands, Mrs. Latimer. See the pink polish on his nails. I declare those nails ought to be put in Tiffany’s show-window. I’ve half a mind to paragraph the colonel’s finger-nails as a reward for that joke about the night-shirt.”

The colonel smiled, well pleased. “I don’t see why a man who acts on the stage

or writes poetry shouldn't dress himself decently," he remarked placidly. "I once knew a really great novelist in Germany and he made it a point never to put on a dress coat. 'What is the use of being a celebrated writer if I've got to wear a dress coat?' he used to inquire. Now in my opinion the greater the artist, the greater should be the development of the æsthetic faculties. I always think of Wagner composing his music in a gown of royal purple velvet and drinking champagne out of a superbly chased golden tankard."

Miss Bertram wondered if he ever thought of Mrs. Von Spitzenheim wearing a dirty calico apron and continually washing dishes. Aloud she replied—"Well, that is all very fine, but it costs money. Wagner had a king to give him whatever he wanted, but most artists haven't anything except empty pockets and unpaid bills. Harold Wayne, however, is rich."

"Oh, Wayne is anything you like—he is

the very devil. Why don't you paragraph *him*? it will help you out with your wash-money. You must have wash-money." The colonel sat up so that the light shone on one side of his face, and he twisted the ends of his mustache until they resembled two fine threads of gold-wire.

Marion listened, speaking occasionally, yet ill at ease. The sandwiches were being distributed. The guests ate ravenously. They devoured the bread and butter as if they had had nothing to eat for a week. They swallowed the watery lemonade in long draughts. A young man with bright brown hair brushed back from his high forehead approached her chair bearing a plate, and a glass wherein the pale yellow of the lemonade shone in cloudy vibrations. "I don't believe you remember me, Mrs. Latimer," he began, when Miss Bertram interrupted him—

"For mercy's sake don't introduce yourself!" she cried. "Why, your name is longer than the serial stories you write, and

we'll take it like the stories, in instalments. He's got three hyphens, Mrs. Latimer, positively three hyphens."

Marion smilingly protested, saying she remembered the young man very well. He meanwhile turned to Miss Bertram and the colonel, waving the glass in the air. "That's a vicious libel," he exclaimed. "On my word of honor I've only two hyphens; Hector Jones-Drury-Lawton. There! You ought to know by this time that I've only two hyphens. Isn't my name on the outside of every magazine cover?"

He gave Marion the glass and plate. The colonel rushed in the direction of the refreshment-table to get something for Miss Bertram. The carpet already was strewn with crumbs. Many of the guests disdained the plates, taking the sandwiches in their hands. One man, shaking with laughter, poured the entire contents of his lemonade glass over a woman's skirt. He crouched on the floor, rubbing the silk with his handkerchief, and

while he was so occupied somebody sprawled over him and fell headlong. The strident mirth rose in prolonged shouts. In the distance Mr. Hartly could be heard saying loudly, "I tell you the divorce laws in this State are all wrong. I can't see the justice of them. A man, for example, is a dipsomaniac. He comes home night after night roaring drunk. He beats his wife and abuses his children. The home becomes a hell. The family is destroyed. Yet the laws of the enlightened State of New York say to that suffering wife: 'You can't get a divorce for that. No matter how much you are abused you can't get a divorce.' And so the woman lives out her life in misery. On the other hand a man may have the happiest home in the world. He adores the mother of his children. Yet, if in a moment of passion or forgetfulness he makes love to another woman, bang! that is the end of it. Madam packs her trunks and goes back to her father, and the children are eternally

disgraced. I say such laws are an insult to our civilization. Why, just look at the monstrous injustice of it all. What sort of morality is that? Who invented so monstrous a code?"

Marion listened with a strange interest. She had often heard her father talk in this strain, but now his words impressed her as they had never done before. They forced themselves upon her like something that comes to stay eternally and cannot be repelled or forgotten. Miss Bertram spoke to her suddenly.

"Mr. Harrison is going to recite. I'll bet anything he will give us 'The dream of Eugene Aram.' That is his show piece." She patted her flounces as Mr. Harrison advanced. He had a beautiful ideal face, white and thin, and lighted by gray eyes deeply set in his head. When he began to recite the colonel came back with some sandwiches for Miss Bertram, who whispered with her mouth full. "You must listen to

‘Eugene Aram.’ He does it splendidly. It will make your flesh creep.”

The recitation finished amid a storm of applause. Mr. Harrison wiped the perspiration from his forehead and asked for a glass of lemonade.

“You see that coarse-looking woman over there?” inquired Miss Bertram, still eating and dropping crumbs upon her lavender silk gown. “Well, that is Mrs. Morton. Did you never hear about her? She married a great artist—a really great artist—and took him to live in a horrible boarding-house, with her still more horrible mother. Oh, I assure you this house is a palace compared with that. And, my dear, if you could see Mrs. Sanders! the very worst type of a beastly woman! Basil Morton stood her and the boarding-house as long as he could; then one fine day he bolted, eloped to Paris with one of his models.* Since that time the girl, Marietta Winter, has become

* See Basil Morton’s *Transgression*.

the sensation of the day. The French artists are mad about her. She is still living with Morton, and I heard there were six portraits of her in the last salon."

"And his wife? what has she done meanwhile?" asked Marion, regarding her with interest.

"Oh, she!" Miss Bertram's eyes met the colonel's amused glance, and they both began to laugh. "Well, of course she got a divorce and permission to marry again. But she hasn't married." The colonel roared as this information was imparted. "No, she hasn't married again, and she isn't likely to marry. Why, just look at her! did you ever see such a sight as she is? She was always stupid, but a few years ago she was a perfect dream of beauty, slender and pink and white—the loveliest blonde! Now she weighs close on to two hundred, and they say she has Bright's disease. I shouldn't wonder. She is terribly bloated. Soon she will be the very image of her mother."

Miss Bertram emptied her third glass: "I think I've got another anecdote," remarked the colonel. "Only I warn you it's ten times worse than the first. You might gloss it over and lick it into shape for *Facts*, that is, if you are still short of wash-money."

Miss Bertram settled herself in her chair, giggling — "Now, Colonel, you are dreadful this evening. You are utterly demoralized. I shall tell your wife."

"Oh, my wife, my wife!" and he laughed again, stuffing a whole sandwich into his mouth. At that moment Mrs. von Spitzenheim appeared at the parlor door, her eyes seeking Marion; the latter started up eagerly. "My husband is here?" she asked, quickly. Mrs. von Spitzenheim wore a calico frock and a white apron. Her broad flat face was scarlet, and beads of moisture stood out on her forehead.

"Yes, Mr. Latimer has called for you. He won't come in because he isn't dressed." She waved one fat finger lovingly toward

the colonel and then shut the door. The colonel, however, paid no attention. He was busy relating his story to Miss Bertram, speaking in whispers. His polished nails glistened in the light. Marion said good-night to her father, who sought to detain her.

“My dear, it is very early. We are to have some music presently. Miss Gibson will sing. You have never heard Miss Gibson? she’s wonderful! A superb artist! she is trying to get an engagement. When she does, I tell you she will take the town by storm.”

“Thanks, papa, I should like to stay, but Philip is waiting. He is not dressed, or he would come in.”

“Well, I’m sorry. Good-night.”

Marion slipped out. Philip was standing in the hall. He yawned impatiently, as she began to search for her hat and coat among the piles of wraps on the staircase. When they were outside walking in the direction of

the cars, she spoke irritably. "This is the last time! I am not going there any more. Do you hear, Philip? It is the last time. Those parties are really too disreputable—too disgusting."

And she continued to talk in this strain, with bitter emphasis, until she and Philip were in bed, with the faint spark from the chandelier piercing the darkness of the chamber like a yellow eye, fixed and relentless.

VI.

TING-A-LING went the door-bell, and after some moments of delay Sarah came into the bedroom holding a card between her greasy forefinger and thumb. "The gentleman's in the study, ma'am," she announced in a sepulchral whisper, as though she were communicating something to be ashamed of. Marion put down her book, and seizing the bit of pasteboard, eagerly scanned it. "Mr. Harold Wayne," she read, with a sudden feeling of joy so intense that it almost choked her. "Very well," she said, calmly ; "say that I will be there directly."

She went hastily to the looking-glass, wondering if she were dressed nicely enough to receive him. Her gown was a plain one of deep red cashmere that showed to advantage the marble whiteness of her complexion and

the scintillant yellow of her hair. She entered the study leisurely, trying not to appear surprised or disconcerted. Wayne was sitting with his back to the light, holding his hat and stick. His figure stood out against the white glare that filled the window, as might a crayon-drawing on a naked canvas. He rose and bowed, extending his hand, which she touched gently with her cool, slim fingers. "You see," he said, "that I have taken you at your word ; I have found my way to you at last."

"I am very glad to see you," she replied, brightly. "I began to think you were never coming. I fancied you would come as soon as you received my note. Then I supposed I should meet you at my father's, on Friday evening, but you were not there."

"Of course I wanted to come at once, but I have been out of town. I went down to the country for a few days."

"The country at this season of the year? How strange !" she said, interrogatively.

“Yes. I was invited to play poker with a party of friends. It was rather amusing. I lost a pot of money, but I also drank no end of champagne, and on the whole enjoyed myself.”

Marion regarded him with a new and curious interest; she would like to be in his “set,” she thought, and mix with his friends. Naturally they always enjoyed themselves. It was a mad round of pleasure from week’s end to week’s end. An existence gay with laughter accentuated by the blond sparkle of wine, the sheen of diamonds, the sumptuousness of Paris-made gowns. She noted the extreme elegance of his dress, the patent leather shoes pointed at the toes, the cluster of violets in his buttonhole. How unlike the slipshod untidiness of the literary people she saw at her father’s, and the doubtful correctness of Philip’s friends! It was the inevitable and immovable contrast between riches and poverty, the wide-stretching and shocking discrepancy between success and

failure. How little he resembled a poet! he was like a fashion plate. She saw his eyes roam about the study, gravely taking in all its ugly, trivial details.

"This is where your husband works, I suppose?" he asked.

"He does most of his work at the office of the *Evening Messenger*. He only writes occasionally at home. I'm afraid the place looks dreadfully slovenly, but Philip does not like to have his papers disturbed."

"I can well understand that. I never allow anybody to meddle with my things. I dust my writing-table myself every day. My servant is forbidden to touch it." He paused for an instant, then continued, in a gently insinuating way, "You can't imagine how pleased I am to see you again and how often I have thought of you since—since that day. I shall never forget you as you opened the parlor door and stepped into the room. Your pale-gray gown made you appear like an airy shape emerging from the

shadows, and then, when your father lighted the lamp I was astonished to see how beautiful you were. I liked you right away, and you knew it, didn't you ? ”

She changed color, a trifle embarrassed. “ I don't know—I hardly thought about it.”

“ Oh, yes, you knew ! a woman always knows intuitively when a man admires her. Now, confess that you knew it.”

Marion laughed nervously. “ You are very persistent, Mr. Wayne. I suppose I must say that I knew it. Does that satisfy you ? ”

He leaned forward, and taking her hand, pressed it to his lips, dropping it quickly. The blood mounted to her face, then ebbed away, leaving her very pale. He looked out of the window before he spoke again. The white afternoon light was now tinged with a reddish-gold reflection, that made a refulgent background for his form. “ I am sure we shall be very good friends,” he said. “ I should prize your friendship. I have

never seen anybody that even suggested your personality. Most of the women I have known were frivolous and artificial, and sooner or later they lied to me and deceived me. I do not think you would deceive anyone you cared for."

"No, not if I really cared—but——"

"But what?"

"Nothing—tell me how you got to know father."

"He brought some verses to my publishers' one day. I was there, and his appearance struck me. I thought he had the most beautiful head—so poetic! that shining white hair and those piercing, steely blue eyes impressed me very vividly. We spoke of modern literature, of the French Romantics, then of Voltaire, of Hartmann, of Schopenhauer. Finally he asked me to come to his house and hear him play some of his compositions, and I went. I took pleasure in studying him. He is a wonderful man. His opinions are so clear and concise, and

withal so logical. He seemed to me more charming the second than the first time we met. We talked of everything, but principally of Russian Realistic Fiction—of Turgénief and Tolstoï and Dostoievsky. He has read every well-known book, that man ! it is prodigious. I suppose I stayed with him for two hours at least. Then all at once, you came—and I did not think of him any more.”

“ I don’t see how that can be true, Mr. Wayne ; I am not clever like papa. I always hated to read for reading’s sake. But it was certainly odd that we appeared to be friends from the very beginning, was it not ? Of course I had heard of you. I knew you by reputation long ago. Yet you did not seem to be a stranger. I appeared to know you well at once. One can never account for those—how shall I say it ? ”

“ You mean those subtle attractions that draw two people, hitherto unknown to each other, together, as though they were already intimate acquaintances ? ”

“Yes, something like that.”

“It is very sweet of you to tell me this. One thing that impressed me instantly was your frankness. I observed it before we had exchanged ten words.” There was a moment’s silence, then he asked—“Have you read all my poems? Which do you like best?”

“Well, I think I prefer the sonnets addressed to E. M. I have been curious to learn whether E. M. was a real person, or only an imaginary one.”

“She was a real woman. She has been dead for some time.”

“And you loved her?”

“I suppose I must have done so. I was her professed lover for five years.”

It did not strike Marion that there was anything out of the way in this somewhat brutal confession. She looked down at her hands and said, half regretfully: “You must have suffered in losing her. She was beautiful?”

“Quite the contrary. She resembled an ape.”

“Then why did you love her?” Marion inquired, not understanding.

“How do I know? Who can explain the mystery of love? She attracted me. She was clever and witty. I began by admiring her genius for epigram, and her keen sense of humor—a trait that is rare in women. I ended—well, in the usual way.”

“How did she die? I should like to hear more about her.” Marion was interested. In awakening the reminiscence she was brought to a fuller comprehension of this man who so wholly occupied her thoughts. She wanted to know how he had behaved when a boy—what he had done when he reached manhood—what adventures had befallen him since. She waited impatiently for his answer, closing and unclosing the while her slim fingers, with a nervousness she could not subdue.

“Well, she became a victim to the opium

habit. She succumbed so completely to the dominion of this fatal drug that I had her placed at last under medical treatment. She endured the torments of the damned. But the doctors cured her in the end. No sooner, however, was their vigilance relaxed than she went back again to the cursed stuff, like a pig to the gutter. She got perfectly desperate and demoralized. One day I took her hypodermic syringe away from her, and she became raving mad, shrieking, and tearing me with her nails. I threw the syringe into her face and told her to go and kill herself, and be done with it."

"Yes! and what then?"

"She finished by killing herself, that's all. I was not sorry. My affection was dead. When I touched her it was as if I held a corpse in my arms. She had lost every semblance of womanhood. She had become a mere lump of matter."

Wayne crossed his legs, staring thoughtfully. "You have no idea of the horrors

attendant upon the opium habit," he resumed. "Why, I have seen that woman on her knees, grovelling before the doctor or the nurse, and imploring them for the love of God to give her one grain more. When they get to that pass they would barter their souls, renounce all hope of heaven, plunge willingly into the very vortex of hell, for the sake of the most minute particle of that filthy poison."

"And it was to this depraved creature that you dedicated those exquisite sonnets?" said Marion, in a low tone.

"Well, you see I wrote most of them before she sank so low—before she made a wild beast of herself. Now I think only of the poetry, and not of her. I regard the lines purely from the standpoint of art, and the subject that inspired them does not enter into my mind at all."

"How horrible for a woman to degrade herself in such a manner! I never heard of anything more disgraceful."

Wayne smiled a little. "Yes, it is disgraceful, of course, but when one has really lived, so many things are disgraceful, or at all events appear to be. Nothing of the sort makes a lasting impression. There are different degrees, and that is about all. Now, what can be more disgraceful than to be obliged to dress one's self every morning of one's life? It is disgraceful to be forced to eat. To eat for pleasure would be delightful—but as a necessary end to existence it is humiliating. Love—ordinary love—is the most disgraceful thing of all."

"In what way?" Marion opened her eyes in genuine surprise.

"Let us define love. What is it? I know of no better definition than that given by a brilliant French writer. He says love is the affiliation and contact of epiderms."

Marion laughed. She thought she had never heard anything so amusing, but when her mirth had subsided she considered it obligatory upon her to look properly

shocked. "Oh, Mr. Wayne," she exclaimed. "And where do you put the poetry, the sentiment of love?"

"The poetry and the sentiment are preludes—fore-runners. When the love itself is an accomplished fact, the poetry and the sentiment—the illusions and the expectations—disappear like moonbeams swallowed up in darkness. You can't deny the truth of this. We admire people who are intellectual and talented, but we love only those who appeal to our physical senses. But nobody cares to admit this, because we dwell in an age of hideous hypocrisy and systematic deceit. Have you seen Mantegazza's book, '*Il Secolo Tartuffo*'—The Tartuffian Age? No? You should get it. At heart every man and every woman feels as I do. Love is no more a poetic sentiment than quenching one's thirst is a poetic sentiment. There may be poetry in the Venetian glass we raise to our lips. It is lovely to look at. Yet, whether we hold an artistic bauble or a

stone mug, the drinking itself is all the same. I have told you I loved an ugly woman. I was drawn to her at first by her charms of mind. But do you suppose I thought of her intellect when I possessed her finally ? ”

Marion laughed again. “ No,” she replied, “ I don’t suppose anything of the kind. But what a cynic you are ! I fancy you do not believe in virtue or high ideals.”

“ Oh, virtue ! ” he said, laughing also. “ Well, for me, a virtuous woman means simply one who has had the misfortune to be born without passion.”

Marion raised her head and bit her lips, making no answer. Presently he continued.

“ I have often dreamed of an ideal love, an affection which having its origin in a mental sympathy, is continually fanned into fresh flame by the growth and development of the intellectual qualities. I have sought a love like this everywhere, and once or twice—as in the case of the woman we have been dis-

cussing—I fancied I had found it; but I have met with continual disappointment.”

“Then you have no faith in an enduring love?”

Wayne shrugged his shoulders. “I have never seen it. To me it represents a Utopia. If I could experience such a love, my character, my ideas of life—everything about me, would be permanently altered. But I have not lived either in ignorance or blindness, and therefore I say that love between two persons of opposite sex can no more last indefinitely than a fire built with a bushel of coal can burn forever.”

She was silent, oppressed by a multitude of confused thoughts called up by his words. His glance shifted to the portrait of George Eliot on the wall, then to the brandy and the cheap cigars upon the table. Without appearing to do so, he noted each proletarian detail of the shabby room and the sharp contrast offered by Marion's youth and beauty. “What do you do with yourself all

day?" he asked, unconcernedly. "Do you go out—pay visits—shop?"

"I don't pay many visits. My sister likes me to go to her house as often as possible. We are much attached to each other, but I know very few people, and most of them bore me."

"You won't be bored if you will let me be your friend. I shall devote all my energies to amusing you. May I be your friend?"

"If you like—but——"

"But—well?"

She avoided his searching gaze. "I don't know. I have forgotten of what I was thinking."

He did not insist: he dexterously changed the subject of conversation. "I received your sister's invitation this morning. That is one reason why I made a point of calling upon you to-day. I wanted to thank you."

"I hope you will go. It will be a lovely ball."

“Certainly I am going. I want to see you in evening dress. Your shoulders must be superb. Are they not?”

“How should I know? I never think about myself. I like to dance and enjoy myself when I get the chance.”

“I wish you would take luncheon with me some day at Delmonico’s. Will you?”

“What! With you alone? It wouldn’t be proper.”

“Nonsense! Of course it would be proper. Why, lots of women go there with men every day of their lives, girls with married men, and young men with married women, and married people with each others’ husbands and wives. I assure you it is perfectly proper. I shouldn’t have asked you if there had been any harm in it. Now, do say you will lunch with me to-morrow.”

Her hesitation was of short duration. “Well, I should like to go, if you are quite sure there is no harm.” Secretly she was overwhelmed with delight at the mere idea

of going, but she made an effort to hide her elevation of spirits.

“Where shall I meet you? May I come here to fetch you at twelve o’clock?”

“Yes, that will be the best, I think.”

Wayne rose slowly to his feet. The moment was an opportune one for leave-taking. Marion rose also, holding out her hand with an exquisite blush dyeing her cheeks. She was agitated, she did not know why. Meanwhile the winter afternoon had waned almost into twilight. Through the study window the sky shone in streaks of palest purple. The room itself had grown so dark that she could with difficulty distinguish his features. Once more he raised her fingers to his lips. “Good-by, or rather, *au revoir*,” he said, and went out shutting the door noiselessly. She stood for a moment in the semi-gloom, her eyes closed, her hands clasped in a passionate gesture. Then she moved to the mantel-piece, groped for the match-box, and having found it, struck a light. Her hands trembled

so that the tiny flame was extinguished before she could reach the lamp. She struck a second match impatiently, and presently the sulphurous glow from the lamp illumined her face and one side of her red gown. She sat down in Philip's chair, leaning her head upon one hand, and gave herself up to enchanting dreams. Splendid visions flitted through her mind like shooting-stars at dusk. She saw herself surrounded by love and splendor, living ideally, enjoying an individual existence apart from all enforced claims, all subjection, all responsibility. When Philip came home she was still sitting motionless in the study, but her face was transfigured.

VII.

SHE spent at least two hours at her toilet in the morning, viewing her figure in the mirror in a dozen attitudes, and studying her complexion, with the aid of a hand-glass, in the unbroken flood of sunlight that streamed into the bedroom. Already she had thrown about the contemplated image of Wayne a mantle of romanticism as subtle as it was enduring, and made more vivid and real by reason of a purely sentimental fancy. In this man, with his nineteenth-century scepticism, his intense egotism, his marked though erratic talent, she saw yet a different type, wherein were blended the heroism of the Middle Ages, the clear beauty of an ancient statue, the learning of a renowned philosopher. She was ashamed of her ignorance when she thought of him. For the first time

in her life she was animated by an ambition that was not merely material. She longed to shine intellectually, to talk easily and brilliantly. She desired to fascinate him by speeches, as he at times fascinated her. She was aware, however, that such a man, while not demanding in every instance cleverness or wit—qualities which he often regards as a sort of mental overgrowth—expects from the woman he loves something that is substantial enough to be a substitute. She must charm, therefore, by her beauty, her physical youth and freshness, and, above all, her appreciation—an appreciation delicately conceived and diplomatically bestowed. The possibilities called up by these reflections were so many and varied that she ceased finally all attempt to formulate them. Her mind was replete with scenes wherein words or their forms had no part. As twelve o'clock—the hour of his coming—approached she grew cold with nervous excitement. She knew that she would have difficulty in con-

trolling her voice when she should address him. She adjusted her hat feverishly, so that he might not be kept waiting. Then, hardly conscious of what she was doing, she saturated her handkerchief with Eau de Cologne and rubbed a few drops of the perfume upon her ears. It wanted yet a quarter of an hour to noon, so she flung herself down in one of the study chairs and tried to read a new book that Philip had been asked to review for the *Evening Messenger*. But she began to yawn convulsively, incapable of fixing her attention upon a single sentence. Some freshly written sheets of manuscript lay on the table. Philip, having recovered to some extent from the bitter disappointment incident to the return of his story from *Dexter's*, had heroically commenced an even more ambitious work. For a long time he had declared his intention of writing a novel depicting peculiar phases of American life and manners. This was undoubtedly the opening chapter. She picked it up, glanced over it casually, and

laid it down again. Another fit of yawning seized her, and she sat motionless with her hands on the arms of the chair, her head thrown back, her eyes closed, thinking of Philip. How patient he was, how brave, and uncomplaining; yet he was not the man she ought to have chosen for a husband. It did not occur to her that her marriage had invested her with any special responsibilities. The duties and obligations of the conjugal state were mere vague, shadowy sensations and remote ideas. She would have denied indignantly the imputation that she did not love Philip. Of course she was fond of him, but that was no reason why she should not let Wayne be her friend. She wished for independence—she wanted to enjoy. She craved strong emotion. It was not in her nature to lead a humdrum existence devoid of exciting influences. As she thought of this she heard Sarah moving about in the bedroom. “This is Wednesday,” she murmured; “and she must be putting away

the clean linen from the wash." Unable to sit still, Marion went to inspect the clothes.

"Mr. Latimer's socks is very bad, ma'am," remarked Sarah, holding up a pair that were full of holes.

"Yes, I know. I will mend them to-night," Marion replied, walking up and down restlessly. She pulled open her work-bag that stood on the chimney-piece. "I am not sure that I have any darning cotton of that color," she continued, indifferently. Just then the bell rang and her manner changed instantly. "Run, Sarah, and open the door. And put your sleeves down. You look horrible with your sleeves up and your damp, red arms showing."

She waited for a moment, then entered the study as Wayne came in by the outer door. "Good-morning, Mrs. Latimer," he said, taking her hand in his for an instant. "I see you are ready. Shall we start at once?"

"Yes, I think so," she replied, hoping he would not hear Sarah singing in the kitchen.

As they passed down the long staircase he complimented her on her appearance, and on reaching the florist's at the corner he stopped to purchase a great bunch of violets that she laughingly pinned to her jacket. The Avenue wore the semi-deserted aspect of noon, but Delmonico's was crowded almost to suffocation. They had some difficulty in finding a table, but finally one was secured close to a window screened with evergreens. The groups of people moving to and fro, the waiters hurrying by with noiseless tread, the gilding on walls and ceiling, the mirrors, the colors of the women's dresses—blue, green, heliotrope, tan, scarlet—excited Marion as might a potent draught of wine. Wayne ordered luncheon and a bottle of champagne. He appeared to know nearly everybody in the room. He bowed again and again. A number of persons stared curiously at Marion. A strange face at Delmonico's creates about the same amount of wonder as might the advent of an Indian in war paint and

feathers. Then all at once, while she was enjoying this attention, secretly flattered, she changed color; for, advancing toward her across the room, in a tortuous course through the labyrinth of tables and chairs, came Miss Bertram and Colonel von Spitzenheim.

“Why, Mrs. Latimer! Who would have thought of meeting you here!” exclaimed Miss Bertram, affably, as the colonel clicked his heels together and executed his military bow. “No doubt you are dumfounded at seeing me. I don’t get to Del’s once in six months; but the dear colonel had some items to give me for *Facts*, and invited me to luncheon while he told them. I’ve nearly died of laughing. He is the most amusing man, the colonel.”

“Oh! no, I’m only trying to perform a Christian duty by helping Miss Bertram out with her wash-money,” answered the colonel, gravely, twirling his mustache. “I’ve been relating the story of Mrs. Van Snyder’s butler, who eats two dozen eggs for breakfast

every morning—one dozen boiled, the rest made into an omelette. Besides this he drinks a pound of tea a day, and lately what do you suppose he has done? Well he has carried one of the drawing-room chairs—a sixty-dollar chair, if you please—into the back-yard, and there he sits all day long smoking a pipe, with his feet resting on a tomato-can. The cook does nothing but bring him out cups of tea, and not a stroke of work will he do. Mrs. Van Snyder watches him out of the back window and goes into hysterics.”

“Why doesn’t she dismiss him and be done with it?”

“Ah! that’s just the point,” said the colonel, laughing immoderately. “She can’t dismiss him. That is where the joke comes in. She’s afraid to say a word to him. It seems he looked into the boudoir one day and saw——”

“Now, colonel, for mercy’s sake come away before you disgrace yourself in public,” giggled Miss Bertram, pulling him by the

sleeve. "I assure you, Mrs. Latimer, he gets worse and worse every day. Yet if it were not for him," she whispered in Marion's ear, "I shouldn't have one clean petticoat a week."

She had bestowed more than an inquiring glance upon Wayne, who meanwhile had turned to speak to a lady behind him.

"Isn't that the poet?" she whispered again; and on Marion's nodding assent, she made a significant grimace. The colonel stared a little, and presently he and his companion moved away and were lost in the throng that filled the doorway and the corridor beyond.

"What an interesting couple," Wayne observed, as the waiter brought the oysters. "I was talking to my friend, but I heard everything they said, all the same."

"I suppose I ought to compliment you on being able to attend to two conversations at once," replied Marion. Then she added, dubiously, "Miss Bertram is a terrible woman.

She's a society reporter. She writes for *Facts*. I only know her because she happens to live in the same house with papa. She is clever, but I think her a dangerous person, and I'm sorry I met her, for she will tell everybody she saw me lunching here with you and drinking champagne. She might make a paragraph out of it for *Facts*, and then my husband would see it. She professes to like me, but she would sacrifice her own mother for the sake of five dollars. I wish she hadn't seen us together."

Wayne looked amused. "You don't mean to say you never come here to luncheon?"

"I come occasionally with my sister, but I have never been here with a man."

"Well, what of that? Do you take it for granted that all these women are lunching with their husbands?" He motioned to the waiter to fill her glass a second time. "Are you fond of champagne? It is the only wine that is fit to drink; but it bloats one frightfully. Look at that man facing you,

the one with the pink rose. You would say he was made of inflated bladders, and that if you pricked him with a pin he would burst. It all comes from champagne. The quantity he drinks is appalling. But did you ever behold such a figure? A year ago he was a slim fellow of really elegant build. Now he is hideous, and is killing himself to boot."

During the progress of luncheon he continued to entertain her with anecdotes relating to various people in the room. "See that man with the long silky mustache! He is always here. No matter when you come in you will find him sitting at that identical table, eating. They say he takes eight meals a day, and the waiters hate him because he will persist in wiping the plates and glasses with his napkin as if they were dirty. It is too funny sometimes to watch him. That stout woman with the wig is quite a swell, but she has a weakness for black silk. She never wears anything but black silk. I have heard it hinted that even her bed-sheets

are composed of this material, and somebody said that she wept black silk tears. Isn't that delicious? Fancy weeping black silk tears."

Marion's eyes danced with mirth. Although Wayne's conversation was light and frivolous enough, she detected in his bearing a more marked deference and admiration than heretofore. When luncheon was over he said to her, casually, but with a certain earnestness that did not escape her, "Why won't you come to my rooms and see my pictures? I have some charming water-colors. And then there are my books! My library is not large, but it is good of its kind. Will you come?"

"To your rooms! Oh! no. I couldn't do that," she exclaimed, starting back in alarm that was, however, partly assumed. To herself she was saying, "How I should enjoy it, if I only dared." The wine, to which she was unaccustomed, had mounted to her head, and the cold January air striking her face confused her a little.

"There is no reason why you shouldn't come. Why, I've taken lots of women there to see my things. Say you will come."

"Where do you live?" she asked, already conceding.

"In the Wickham—a big bachelor apartment house. All you have to do is to step into the elevator and go up-stairs. You see nobody. It is quite near here, too—not ten blocks away. I should take such pleasure in showing you my things! I feel as if I had known you for years—as if we had been intimate for a long time. You are the first beautiful woman I ever saw who was also intelligent."

This was scarcely true, but in hearing it her features beamed with a happy light. "Oh! but I am not intelligent," she cried, softly. "I am sure Philip thinks me dull. He never consults me about his writing. He rarely asks for my opinion or for any sort of criticism."

"That, I dare say, is because he considers

himself an accurate judge of his work. Some writers are able to bestow upon their compositions a dispassionate valuation. I myself am one of these fortunates, or unfortunates. I never understood how an author could run hither and thither with a manuscript, button-holing people and demanding opinions. Perhaps my own vanity and conceit disqualify me from comprehending it. Besides, I can't imagine anyone's judgment being of real importance when obtained in that way. I appreciate a voluntary approval or a spontaneous criticism. These appeal to me as genuine; but to go around reading passages and selections, and saying, "Now, my dear fellow, how does this strike you?" always seemed to me the height of absurdity. If your friend replies frankly, and says, 'Rubbish!' you are wounded and think him an ass. If he praises the work extravagantly, that is only what in nine cases out of ten you are doing yourself, and, moreover, you have a lingering suspicion that he isn't

really telling you what he honestly means, and you go away dissatisfied."

"What a cynic you are," she exclaimed, gayly, and he shrugged his shoulders with a queer smile.

They walked on briskly. Marion's cheeks were flushed from the exercise in the bleak wind and from the champagne she had drunk. The rich perfume of the violets on her breast mounted to her brain. How charming it would be to have violets and champagne every day! She felt as if she were walking upon air. The rapidly moving figures that passed her in the street were no more to her than so many atoms whirling by in the torpid sunshine. She no longer remembered Philip, nor did she even consider herself. Her mind was occupied with Wayne, and she thought only of how she might please him. She was ready to make any concession in order to keep him as a friend. Completely under the sway of a powerful passion that she did not attempt to hide

from her own intimate consciousness, she was gradually being carried, she knew not whither, unmindful and careless of the bitter that might lurk in the sweet. She pressed her fingers together inside her muff, reflecting, "I will live! I must know what life is. I must feel and enjoy, even if I later pay the penalty."

They came presently to the house where Wayne had his rooms — a great, majestic building whose innumerable rows of windows rose one upon the other until the roof seemed almost to fade into the blue ether above. Immense brackets, with branching gas-jets covered with crystal globes, spread themselves on each side of the entrance like protecting arms. The elevator was not a dozen paces from the open doorway, and in a moment they were carried up to the sixth floor. The man in charge was old and wizened. His back was bent and his face expressionless. "He apparently never sees or hears anything," said Wayne, laughingly, as

he took a key from his pocket and opened the door of his apartment. "If you speak to him he doesn't answer half the time. The janitor knew what he was about when he put him in charge of the elevator."

Marion stepped into the rich gloom of the sitting-room. She was chilled through in spite of the quick exercise, so she walked at once to the fire that burned beneath the chimney-piece and sank into an easy-chair before the transparent flame. "What a lovely room!" she said, with a sigh of admiration.

Wayne threw off his greatcoat and held his hands to the blaze. "Yes, it is nice enough," he replied, carelessly. Her gaze swept to the piano. "So you are musical too? I wish you would play for me." Her voice had a low, penetrating, nervous ring. She was awed by the delightful sense of intimacy that arose from finding herself alone with him in this strange place.

"I will play for you some other time.

My hands are numb with the cold. I couldn't strike a note. Besides, I want to talk to you. Are you fond of music? You must be. At heart you are an artist."

"Yes, I love it; but I have no piano, so I do not play much. How accomplished you are!"

"Oh! I don't know about that. Music and poetry always seemed to me to go together. I could never separate them, either mentally or practically. When I first began, as a boy, to scribble verses, I began also to strum a guitar." He drew a chair close beside hers and sat down leisurely. "That reminds me of something amusing. Let me tell it to you. About a year ago I passed a pretty woman in the street. I was attracted first by a knot of silvery blond hair shining beneath her hat. I admired, too, the slow, swinging movement of her hips as she walked. Then once I caught the pure outline of her profile that was like some rare marble. I was entranced. I saw in her a sub-

ject for a poem. I followed her to her home and discovered that she was a music-teacher. Nothing could have pleased me more. I engaged her to come here and teach me to play. She was the prettiest creature! The dappled pink of her cheeks was exquisite, and her eyes were like turquoises. Well, she came twice a week to give me a lesson, and I paid her a whole quarter in advance. I pretended I knew nothing about music, and I pounded away at scales and five-finger exercises in the most heroic manner. It was laughable to see her patient, pathetic attempts to explain her method to me. I am sure she thought me the stupidest pupil she ever had. However, we were getting on swimmingly, and I had risen not only to her favor but to the dignity of the treble parts of some 'Duets for Beginners' that we played together, when one day I made a mess of the whole business. I forgot that she was coming, and I was at the piano playing one of Liszt's Hungarian Rhapsodies in

my finest style, when all at once the door opened and she walked in. If I live to be a thousand I shall never forget the expression of her face."

Marion smiled, stretching her feet over the edge of the fender. "What did she do? Was she very angry?"

"I don't know. She stood there for a moment not uttering a word. Then she sat down and burst into tears. Of course I was stricken with remorse and tried to pacify her. But she wouldn't listen to me, and went away wiping her eyes. The next day she sent back the money I had paid for the quarter. I declare I hate myself when I recall it."

"I should think you would. It was ungenerous to deceive her so. Yet it is funny. I can't help laughing." Marion was looking at the pictures and the low bookcases with their curtains of apple-green silk embroidered in gold thread. She glanced also at the round table littered with books and papers,

the great bronze inkstand, and the countless photographs standing everywhere. Then her eyes met his, and she was impressed with the gravity of the delicate American face sharply outlined against the ruby velvet of a *portière*. How distinctive it was in its pallor! And those long, tapering hands, blue-veined and white, how expressive they were of a certain kind of energy and strength! He observed the contemplative fixity of her gaze. "Of what are you thinking?" he asked.

"I was thinking that my husband would be horribly angry if he knew I had lunched with you," she answered, ignoring the continuation of the episode. "I had to hide your poems away, so that he should not see them."

"Indeed!" he said, without surprise. The color had risen to his face, and there was a slight tightening of his lips as he added, "Then he is not aware of our acquaintance?"

“I told him I had met you, and he seemed displeased, so I said nothing more.”

Wayne got up and went to the window, where he remained for a moment arranging the blind. “Somehow,” he said, with his back toward her, “I can seldom get a decent amount of light into this room.” Then he resumed his seat. “After all,” he continued, “what has he—your husband—to do with it? You did right not to speak of me. A wife who tells her husband everything resembles a child who thrusts its finger between the jaws of a vicious dog to see whether he has teeth. There is to me something positively hideous in this blending of personalities as a matter of duty. That is why I dislike so intensely the idea of marriage. It would gall me unspeakably to know that I was expected to render an account of my actions, whether I felt so disposed or not. I should end by hating my wife and despising myself. Now how does it concern your husband—your lunching with

me, or the fact that you are at this moment sitting beside my hearth? Does it interfere with his peace of mind, or lessen his happiness, so long as he does not know it?"

"No; but if he ever should know it he would be miserable—and naturally I should be miserable."

"Ah! that is precisely the point. Therefore it would be highly immoral on your part to tell him."

She laughed, a trifle uneasily. "Of course I shall say nothing. But there are other ways—there is that horrible Miss Bertram. She would invent anything, and deny it afterward."

"I don't think you need be afraid of her. Besides, there is a sort of special providence that watches over people in such affairs. If everything—if half that goes on around us were discovered, the world would find itself in a pretty mess."

A pause ensued. Then she said, with a glance toward the curtains that separated

the room from the one adjoining, "Is that your bedroom?"

"Yes. Come and see it." He jumped up, drawing the velvet drapery aside; but she shook her head and remained seated. "Oh! no, I won't go in. I will just look at it from here. How fine it is! What a splendid embroidery!" Through the opening she saw the bed with its covering of old-rose satin on which were outlined arabesques and storks in gold. It was not his way to insist. He let the curtain drop gently.

"Yes," he observed, indifferently.

"How many women have you loved?" she asked, by and by.

"I don't believe I have ever loved. I have been the lover, in the world's accepted term, of several women; but that is a far different thing from the love I have often dreamed of giving and taking. You won't be angry if I tell you something?"

"Angry? No. Why should I be angry?"

"Well, then, I think I might love you, be-

cause you are so unlike the rest, and you fill out my ideal. I am sure I could speak my intimate thoughts to you without fear of being misunderstood. And again, if I chose to be silent you would not misinterpret me. I fancy I might realize in you what I have sought for so long and never expected to find—an affection that takes its rise in the mind, is nourished upon intellectual sympathy—and that from this mental companionship love would grow.”

She raised her face with a startled air. He took her hand in his and he could feel it tremble like a fluttering bird. She said nothing, because emotion choked her. She pressed her lips tightly together, to subdue her rapid breathing. There was a tingling sensation in her whole body, and a strange, almost intolerable, heat in her head and chest.

“Listen,” he went on, eagerly. “I confess to you that I have tried to love, time and again; but the vulgarity of love has disgust-

ed me. I want to find poetry afterward, as well as before. I have never found anything but fragments of idealism; scraps of detached sentiment that it was impossible to put together. It was something like a superb *pièce montée* that adorns a banquet-table. How you admire its graceful proportions, its glittering ornamentation, until a waiter hacks a piece out of it revealing the empty interior; then you think only of the *débris*, and presently cease to think of it at all. Another thing has always impressed me unpleasantly. I have wanted to be the first passion of every woman I tried to love; but while I am convinced I have never been the last, I am equally certain of never having been the first. I have served as a sort of sentimental stepping-stone, nothing more. I have taken women from other men, and sooner or later we have separated, they to go their way and I, mine; but not once have I begun at the beginning of love; not once have I held in my arms a woman who was

not perhaps haunted by more blissful memories. And yet no one has longed as I have longed to study the heart of some woman who has never loved before—to whose inexperience I shall come as a revelation. I think you are such a woman. You see I am perfectly frank.”

“You forget,” she replied, in a stifled tone. “There is my husband. We married for love.”

“Oh ! your husband. A husband does not enter into my ideas of love any more than the scullery-maid who helps to prepare a dinner occurs to my mind when I sit down to eat it.”

“You are dreadfully material. Apparently you think of nothing except appetites and their modes of gratification.”

“I can’t help that. All my life long I have endeavored to see less of matter and more of spirit, but somehow I cannot. I have often written my poems in this very room, with my eyes filled with tears—rebel-

lious tears—because in actual life I could find no poetry. I have poetry and beautiful ideals in my soul, but I never meet them face to face. To me existence is mainly brutal, and I am unable to escape from its lowering influences. If I am invited into a stable to inspect a thoroughbred, I admire the animal of course, but I can't help seeing the dirty heap of ill-smelling straw at the bottom of his stall. The poet within me says, 'What a superb creature! How tenderly appealing are his eyes, how exquisite the slender arch of his neck. And how charming is that bit of sapphire sky gleaming through the open door, and the daisies nodding in the grass.' This is what appeals to the poet, but the man is stronger than the poet, and the man sees chiefly the filthy straw. That is the whole thing."

He dropped her hand suddenly. "Tell me," he asked, with a quick change of manner, "do you believe in God?"

She flushed a little, but showed no as-

tonishment at the question. "I have not been educated to believe in God or religion. I belong to no church. Do you believe in Him?"

"No; but if I did it would make no difference about my loving you. When two people, situated as we are, love each other and believe also in God, so much the worse; but it doesn't alter the fact nor the sequel."

"Then to you, as to me, the divinity of Christ means nothing?" she said, in so low a tone that he scarcely heard.

"Oh! yes, it means something. I regard it simply as the symbol of man's divinity, that spirituality I have looked for in vain, which perhaps I shall never find."

"If it exist, why do you not find it in yourself?"

"Because I can only acquire it by association—from inspiration—and this, so far, has been impossible."

The shadows in the little room had deepened. A diamond he wore on his finger

flashed through the creeping gloom. Marion all at once drew her hand into her muff and rose to her feet. "I must go. I am afraid I did wrong to come. Perhaps you think I ought not to have come."

"No, it was very good of you. I like to talk to you because I can say just what I mean. Most women would pretend to be shocked and disgusted at my plain speaking. Women are never really shocked. Among themselves they say things that men would not say to each other; but if a man ventures to be frank and unconventional, they scream and pull their skirts aside, as if in fear of contamination."

"You are very severe. I can see you dislike women."

"I do not dislike you. I want you to let me love you. Do not go yet. Sit down again."

But she had already advanced to the door, drawing her fur boa about her neck. "No, I cannot stay. See, my violets are

wilted from the heat of the fire! What a pity!"

"You must promise to lunch with me again soon. And then I shall see you at the ball."

"Yes, but you must not talk much to me. My husband will be there."

"I don't care about him. Are you not going to answer my question before you go?"

"What question? I did not know you had asked me anything."

"Yes I did. I asked you if I might love you."

"You may if you wish."

He came nearer to where she stood. "And you—will you try to care for me a little?"

"I don't know."

"It is cruel of you to say that."

"Well then, I—I will try."

He caught her suddenly in his arms and kissed her. For a moment she was obli-

ous to the surroundings. She saw nothing but a passion-lit face shining into hers. Then she tore herself from his clasp, and opening the door, she sped down the stairs. Once in the street she paused to take breath. She walked on for a while in the sharp wind, then realizing that she was taking a wrong direction, she smiled foolishly and retraced her steps. "It is all over now," she said to herself. "It is finished. It is all over. I can take back nothing."

VIII.

THE day had been intensely cold, and fresh snow had fallen, making the streets white and glittering. Yet in spite of the piercing atmosphere and the still, penetrating iciness of the night, a crowd of shivering beggars, and a few more warmly clad persons, stood at the foot of the steps leading to the Carter mansion and intently watched the guests that entered, uttering the while rude jests and muttered exclamations of sarcastic admiration. Two footmen bawled directions to appearing and disappearing coachmen, and a couple of policemen sought to keep back the surging throng of curiosity seekers by swearing loudly and brandishing threatening clubs.

Within, the entire long suite of rooms blazed with a soft rose-hued light. From

garret to cellar the house wore a festive appearance. Immense festoons of flowers garlanded the doors and mirrors, and the corners were dusky with blossoming plants. Emily, calm, smiling, serene, stood resplendent beside the drawing-room entrance and received her friends with all the dignity she could summon. The apartment was already full, as was also the music-room beyond. The musicians, seated on a gilded balcony veiled with slender palms and glossy orange trees, played the waltzes of Strauss and Offenbach. The air was hot and scented heavily, like musk. Charles trying to look properly indifferent, strutted about with uplifted head. His breast swelled with self-importance, and he gave languid answers to the delighted enthusiasm of the company. To himself he was saying, "Next year I will show them something yet finer. I'll give a ball that shall cost twice as much as this one. Then people shall see what a man can do when he makes a clean extra million a year."

Marion, in her black and gold gown, had just come in, leaning upon Philip's arm. She wore no jewels, because she had none; but she looked exquisitely lovely. Her arms and shoulders sprang from the soft darkness of the tulle like sculptured marble framed in ebony; and her fine, bright hair glinted strangely in the brilliance. Wayne, who had already arrived and was anxiously watching the door, saw her enter and was struck with her beauty that day by day appealed to him more forcibly. He certainly loved her as he had loved no other woman, and her unschooled heart, that beat apparently only for him, was a constant source of wonder and delight to his tired, sceptical mind. He gazed with a singular eagerness at Philip—displaying the sort of interest a man usually bestows upon the husband of the woman he loves, and which is sometimes fanned into a bold inquisitiveness. He watched them both as they greeted Emily, then turned away arm in arm. Presently her eyes swept

the ball-room, and she caught sight of Wayne's straight figure; she smiled and bowed, a delicate blush coloring her face. Philip noted the greeting, and glanced back to see for whom it was intended. The eyes of the two men met for a brief moment.

"How did he get here—that beast?" asked Philip, angrily. "He is surely not a friend of Emily's."

"He—who? Oh, you mean Mr. Wayne! Why, Philip, I wasn't aware that you knew him even by sight."

He shrugged his shoulders. "I should like to know how he got here. Who brought him?" he said, in the same tone of irritation.

Marion, as yet unskilled in deceit, lowered her gaze from his. "Nobody brought him, Philip. Emily met him somewhere and invited him, because his books are the fashion. When you become a famous author, I dare say, people will run after you, too."

“Insufferable cad!” he murmured, under his breath.

“What is the matter with you?” she inquired, becoming vexed. “It is silly and ungentlemanly to take such a prejudice against a man you do not know and whom everybody else admires. Do you know what people will say? They will accuse you of being jealous of his success. You are nobody—while he is already celebrated.”

“Oh, Marion!” he said, reproachfully. Then, after a pause, he added, “Do not let us discuss the subject here. We have already discussed it at home, and already disagreed.” They stood still beneath a chandelier whence the rosy light gleamed upon her spangled dress, and she dropped his arm. “I will not argue with you,” he continued, looking away from her. “I have told you what I think—what I wish. I object to your knowing that man. I do not care to state my reasons. Perhaps I have none. But that makes no difference.”

"You cannot expect me to pay attention to such nonsense, Philip. If you have reasons, state them."

"It is not necessary. I do not wish you to know Harold Wayne. I forbid you to know him. Do you hear me, Marion? I forbid you."

His voice was quarrelsome, and she grew defiant at once.

"You *forbid* me?" she said, in a low, unsteady tone. "And what if I decline to be forbidden?"

"Then you must answer for the consequences."

"Do you understand what you are doing, Philip?" she asked, passionately. "You are making me hate you."

"Marion!"

"Yes, I repeat it. You are making me hate you." Through the crowd she saw Wayne approaching and she tried to smile. Philip turned and faced him for a second. Then he wheeled about on his heel and went

away. Marion's breast heaved with anger and excitement. Tears stood in her eyes and she could with difficulty avoid bursting into a fit of sobbing.

Wayne meanwhile gazed with a half sneering expression at Philip's retreating form. "What is the matter?" he inquired. "Has your husband been annoying you?"

"Yes, and about you. Oh, you have no idea how unreasonably, how foolishly jealous he is. He makes me hate him. For some cause or other he cannot bear the sight of you or the mere mention of your name. He has forbidden me to know you."

"H'm—rather late in the day for that, I should say. Never mind him. See, they are beginning to dance! give me this waltz. Later we can sit for a while in the conservatory and you must tell me all about it."

The room was suddenly alive with whirling couples that made revolving flashes of green, red, blue, lilac, and white. Marion and Wayne joined the throng, and once in

his arms, moving rhythmically to the inspiring strains of "La Gitana," she forgot Philip's inexplicable behavior, and thought only of love. He, however, stood apart, regarding them in a kind of daze. It had not occurred to him for an instant that she would deliberately disobey him. He could not believe it; and then that man! each time his eyes fell upon the imperturbable countenance of Wayne, a riotous fury possessed him. "What fatality—what cursed fatality!" he said between his teeth. All at once he clenched his hand and a cold perspiration broke out upon his face. "They do not act like comparative strangers," he thought. "Their manner to each other is not that of two people who have met but once for fifteen minutes." This idea tortured him beyond measure. He felt a wild inclination to tear Marion forcibly from Wayne's arms. Just then some one addressed him by name, and starting, he perceived Miss Bertram standing beside him. She wore the same

lavender silk that did duty at Mr. Hartly's "Evenings," the same pair of long mitts that she continually pulled up on her scraggy arms, the same topaz brooch that shed orange-tinted reflections on her throat.

"Good evening, Mr. Latimer. Don't you dance?"

"No," he answered, shortly. He hated Miss Bertram, whom he considered a meddling and unprincipled person.

"Well, I'm glad to see your wife enjoying herself. I'm going to write up the ball for *Facts* and I'll describe her gown. But you'd better keep your eye on her," she added, facetiously. "That poet's a mighty dangerous man."

"Mrs. Latimer is quite able to take care of herself," replied Philip, coldly.

"Oh, yes, of course. I was only joking. When I saw them together the other day I couldn't help wishing I was young again myself, and having a good time instead of working like a slave the way I'm obliged to do."

"Saw them together? what do you mean? saw them where?" said Philip, breathlessly, surprised out of himself.

Miss Bertram's thin bosom heaved with a joy she was unable to suppress. Already in imagination she saw the "Latimer Scandal" detailed in all its glaring vulgarity in the columns of *Facts*, and she was saying to herself, "I shouldn't wonder if the editor raised my salary." Aloud she observed calmly, "Why, at Del's, of course. They were lunching together. What, didn't you know it? Goodness me, I hope I haven't let the cat out of the bag."

He made a strong effort to regain his composure. "Certainly I knew it. I was to have joined them but I was detained until late," he answered with dignity.

Miss Bertram looked astonished, then chagrined, and finally suspicious. She made some trivial remark and passed on to the next room.

Philip remained as if stunned. What

should he do? He could not make a scene in Emily's house. He could do nothing but wait and think. He took a few steps through the crowd of dancers, then stood still again, gnawing his mustache. Marion had deceived him, there was no doubt about that—deceived him for this man whom he loathed. Could it be possible? for a time his eyes were riveted upon a solitary couple moving to the entrancing strains of the waltz. Again they danced together. He followed their course amid the confused mass of colors, the black gown flashing with sparks of gold against the man's black coat. His senses were dulled. The music struck his ears indistinctly like a distant echo. The lights appeared to flicker and grow dim. There was a buzzing sound in his head. "It cannot be that she loves that man—oh, no! that would be too cruel—too horrible!" he said.

As he stood there in his misery, all the striking incidents of his life passed before

him as though from a slowly rotating panorama. He saw Wayne's face—much younger, the tall figure much more slim and immature. He recognized yet another countenance, that of a girl. Then there rose up in his mind's eye, the big square drawing-room in Tenth Street, where he had first seen and loved Marion. A choking sensation filled his throat. He recalled but dimly his subsequent heroic struggles, his enforced baffling with poverty, the ungrateful literary career he had embraced. These were matters of small importance. But to see Marion and Wayne together—and to know that she had lied to him in deed if not in word, crushed him. "The poverty was bad enough, but this, this——" he thought, and got no further.

The music stopped. Flushed and laughing, his wife passed by leaning on Wayne's arm, and in a moment they had entered the green shade of the conservatory that opened from the music-room. Philip was no longer

jealous. He was oppressed with a sense of outrage and blunt despair. A procession of couples promenaded the room, the women fanning themselves, the men short of breath and overheated. Hardly conscious of what he was doing, he followed the train alone, his head bowed, then raised erect like a man walking in his sleep. Near by Charles talked loudly about Lord Chesterfield. At the door-way Emily still stood and welcomed belated guests. Her face was white from fatigue. In a little while the musicians played again and the dancing recommenced. Somebody brushed against Philip, nearly knocking him down, and he was thus roused to acute consciousness of his surroundings. He drew near to Emily and she regarded him in amazement. His face was ghastly and his eyes were blood-shot.

“Good gracious, Philip! Are you ill?” she exclaimed.

“No. I only want to ask you something. Who invited Harold Wayne?”

"I did, of course. Who should invite him?" Emily held herself up with an assumption of haughtiness. She recalled what Marion had told her and was secretly entertained.

"And you are willing to receive him—a drunkard and a libertine? You can invite such a man to your house?" He inquired, vehemently.

"Nonsense! what has happened to you? You look drunk yourself."

At that moment Charles approached. He glanced from one to the other. "What are you talking about, you two?" He asked. Then without waiting for a reply he added: "Where is Marion? I don't see her in the room."

Emily relapsed into her petulant mood. "Philip is taking me to task because Mr. Wayne is here." And she laughed harshly.

"Well, upon my word!" said Charles, staring. "I like that! Whose house is this? Who is going to pay for this ball?"

"I thought perhaps Emily was not familiar with the man's reputation. He isn't fit to enter any decent house," replied Philip, in a smothered tone.

For an instant Charles gazed at him in bewilderment. Then he began to gesticulate and stammer. "What do you mean? You must be crazy. Why, everybody is pointing him out as the lion of the evening. Suppose you let us manage these little things in our own way. We know what we are about." He cleared his throat noisily. "Just wait till you see the supper table. I tell you there's never been anything like it in New York. And next year I'm going to give a ball that will cost twice as much as this. But where is Marion? Why isn't she dancing?"

"She's in the conservatory with Wayne," said Philip, throwing out his hand with a wild gesture.

"Philip, you are making yourself ridiculous by this absurd exhibition of jealousy.

Marion has very little pleasure and you might let her enjoy herself for once," said Emily.

The word "jealousy" seemed to amuse Charles exceedingly. "Good Lord!" he exclaimed, breaking forth into boisterous mirth. "Philip jealous of Wayne? Oh, good Lord!"

The young man smiled bitterly and walked away. For a brief space he hesitated, then with an air of determination he advanced toward the conservatory and parting the green branches that filled in the doorway like a curtain, entered. He saw nothing at first except the glare of lanterns and the shimmer of illuminated foliage, and he heard nothing but the faint splash of a fountain that reared its pale marble amid the network of leaves. Then a murmur of voices was heard farther off, and as he caught the sound a blind rage overcame him. He stood motionless for a moment trying to summon more self-command. Then he went forward

and halted directly in front of Marion and Wayne, who seated side by side on a bench, were talking earnestly and in subdued accents. Philip took no notice whatever of his wife's companion, but addressed her coldly. "Why are you not dancing? Emily has remarked your absence from the ball-room. You had better return with me." He offered her his arm, as she and Wayne rose simultaneously to their feet. She noted Philip's compressed lips and the extreme pallor of his face, and fearing a disagreeable scene, forced a smile.

"How you startled me, Philip!" she exclaimed. "Mr. Wayne, I do not think you have met my husband. Let me introduce you to each other."

Wayne bowed with an easy grace, a faint expression of humorous interest hovering about his mouth. Philip scarcely inclined his head, nor did he look once at the man before him. He again proffered his arm to Marion, who silently took it.

"This is our dance, I believe, Mrs. Latimer," said Wayne, as they reached the door of the conservatory. Then Philip turned fiercely.

"Mrs. Latimer does not dance—with you," he said, in a tone of withering contempt.

Marion paled a little. Wayne merely looked annoyed. He paused. Finally he replied, with some deliberation:

"That is, of course, for Mrs. Latimer to decide."

Marion was thoroughly frightened. She dared not treat Philip's hint with the same disregard she had previously shown. She laughed a little uneasily. "I'm afraid I must ask you to excuse me, Mr. Wayne. I think I will not dance again. I do not feel very well."

He bowed courteously. "As you please, of course," he said, in his polite voice, and left them somewhat abruptly. Her glance travelled down the room for a second. She was thinking, "Suppose I have offended

him? But, no! That is impossible. He understands, and cannot surely blame me for Philip's gratuitous insult." Suddenly she faced her husband, and her anger and disappointment broke forth in a torrent of tremulous, almost inarticulate words. "What do you mean? How dare you treat me so—and for no reason except your petty spite, your jealous ill-nature? It is shameful—cowardly. I will not bear it!"

"Be quiet! People will hear you. I told you if you persisted in ignoring my wishes you should accept the consequences. Hereafter it would be well if you listen to me, for I mean what I say, in every instance."

Tears of rage, wounded pride, and mortification rose to her eyes, and she struggled to suppress them. "You will be sorry for this, Philip," she said, indistinctly. "If you can be determined, so can I. You hate to see me enjoying myself. How unworthy of you! How contemptible! You have in-

sulted Mr. Wayne ; but let me tell you he is not the man to overlook such a thing. He will not readily forget it. No ! And I—I shall not forget it either.”

“ You appear to be very familiar with his disposition. This is extraordinary, considering the shortness of your acquaintance,” he replied, regarding her with a fixity that caused a transient flush to dye her cheeks. She made no answer, and presently he added, more quietly : “ What shall we gain by talking about it ? You understand me. That is sufficient.”

She was still incensed and vindictive.

“ Since I cannot dance take me home. I do not care to stay any longer. You have spoiled my evening—my one evening—and I hope you are satisfied. I shall never forgive you. Do you hear, Philip ? I shall remember it as long as I live, and I shall tell Emily.”

He paid no attention to the threat or what it implied. “ I am quite ready to go,”

he said ; “ unless you want to wait for supper.”

“ Supper ! Do you think I could eat a mouthful after—after all this ? Let us go, by all means. The sooner the better.”

At the drawing-room door she addressed her sister excitedly, scarcely able to restrain her tears. “ Oh ! Emily, I might as well go. It seems I am not allowed to have any pleasure. Philip has grossly insulted Mr. Wayne—forced me to decline dancing with him—and now I cannot, of course, dance at all. It is shameful ! my only evening—the one evening I have been looking forward to for so long ! And it is all owing to jealousy—nothing but nasty, small-souled jealousy.”

Emily bestowed upon Philip a glance full of reproach.

“ It is unmanly to behave so,” she said, holding Marion’s hand protectingly. “ You are making a fool of yourself and spoiling Marion’s enjoyment. Why can’t you let her alone for once ? Mr. Wayne is a charming

man, and I am surprised that you should insult him and in so doing insult your wife also. Why shouldn't she dance with him?"

Philip answered quickly and irritably, "Because I do not choose. This is a matter that concerns Marion and me—no one else. I wish you would drop it."

"I shall not permit you to speak to me in that tone, Philip," began Emily, resentfully. "I dare say you consider yourself privileged to be as disagreeable as you like to my sister because she is your wife. But I am not your wife, and I shall repeat this to Charles."

"Damn Charles!" muttered Philip, and flung himself out of the room.

"What a brute!" exclaimed Emily, her eyes flashing angrily. "It is bad enough to be poor; but to have a husband like that!" She pressed Marion's gloved fingers sympathetically. The air was filled again with gay waltz-music. In the distance Wayne smilingly leaned over a woman who wore a

gown of vivid scarlet, and in a moment both joined the throng of dancers. A pang shot through Marion, and she turned away with a sigh resembling a sob. Farther off Miss Bertram stood in the recess of a window, and questioned Charles concerning the names of the guests. Her topaz brooch flashed in a spot of lurid yellow against the paler yellow of her throat. She nodded her head as Charles talked. He was telling her how much Emily's jewels were worth, and what the supper would cost, adding, "Next year I shall have another clean million, and then I shall show you what I can do."

Marion, meanwhile, whispered hurriedly, "You see for yourself, Emily. I can't imagine what ails Philip. He was never like this before. If he should find out that I made you invite Mr. Wayne he would be in a terrible passion. And much good it has done me! I'm sorry now I asked you. It has ruined my one evening."

"Philip is a beast. You were a little fool

to marry him—a scribbling pauper,” said Emily, opening and shutting her fan of pale pink feathers.

“Yes, I know it was a fatal mistake. It has brought me nothing but misery and humiliation. But what is the use of reminding me of it? I can’t undo it now.” Her lip quivered and her voice faltered. She bade her sister good-night and went out into the hall. Philip was waiting for her upstairs, and when she had found her wraps she followed him silently to the cab. Once within the shadow of the shabby vehicle, with her thin black skirts upturned in a fluffy glittering mass, her tears broke forth and she sobbed unrestrainedly. Philip took no notice. He looked steadily out of the window, occasionally rubbing with his handkerchief the moisture that settled on the pane. His heart was hardened and filled with bitterness. “She has deceived me,” he thought, “and she must be made to suffer.” Then a sense of agony and despair

overcame him, and he wrung his hands in the friendly darkness of the coupé. "My life is broken—broken for the second time. But it shall be also the last," he said to himself. He remembered his art, and his reflections took on a calmer tinge. "I have still that," he exclaimed inwardly. "Thank God I have still that to live for!"

IX.

THE next morning he treated her coldly and deferentially as though he were in the presence of a stranger. During dinner he sat in moody silence, swallowing his beer thirstily, staring dreamily at the gaudy chromos, and sometimes drumming on the table with the handle of his knife. Marion's nerves were still unstrung and the situation was becoming intolerable to her. Wayne's name had not been mentioned again. When either spoke it was about some unimportant household affair. She wondered bitterly if this horrible constraint was destined to endure forever. It could not! she would not allow it to last. She must put an end to it somehow. So, finally, when Sarah stamped into the dining-room with a watery pudding that she set down with a bang in the middle

of the table, subsequently retiring to the kitchen, Marion spoke peremptorily, "Philip, I think you owe me an explanation. I asked you nothing last night because I was too much hurt and ashamed to be able to talk connectedly. But now you must tell me what I have done? I insist upon it."

He cut a slice out of the pudding and began to eat it, his head bent over his plate. "Why do you ask me that?" he inquired. "You deliberately disobeyed me. I don't see what explanation is necessary."

"If I disobeyed you it was owing to your own words that were an insult to us both. I am your wife, but I am not a slave to be ordered here and there. Had you given me a good reason for your extraordinary behavior I might have listened to you. But you gave me no reason. Probably you had none. Therefore I say again you owe me an explanation."

He finished eating and pushed away his plate. Then he gazed sternly and unflinch-

ingly into her eyes. "Answer me one thing, Marion. You told me you had met Wayne at your father's some weeks ago. Have you never seen him since, until last night?"

It was a demand rather than a query, and for a second she changed color and winced. She felt a quick trembling through all her body, accompanied by sudden burning flashes. "He doesn't merely suspect—he *knows*," she thought. "That is the whole secret. But how could he have found out—how?" All at once she recollected Miss Bertram. "It is she who has told him," she said to herself. "The vile creature! she has told him! And but for me she would never have set her foot inside my sister's house." Rage took the place of apprehension. She shut her teeth tightly together, and her eyes shone with a febrile animation. Then, struggling with an additional sense of imposed ignominy, she spoke aloud, imbuing her voice with a superb contempt. "I will tell you the truth, Philip. I would have told you last night,

had you taken the trouble to ask me. I have seen Mr. Wayne once since I met him at papa's. I was waiting for Emily at Delmonico's one day. The room was crowded, and I sat down at the first vacant table so as to secure it. Mr. Wayne happened to pass by, and seeing me there alone, he took a chair beside me for a few moments. I explained to him that I was waiting for Emily. Just then Miss Bertram and Colonel von Spitzenheim stopped to speak to me. They had been lunching together and making up paragraphs for *Facts*; it was she, I suppose, who told you a story about me. It was she who lied to you and filled your mind with suspicion against me and against a man you do not know, and whom you have no cause to dislike. Oh, how despicable—how low! If this is so—if I am right, you should be trebly ashamed of yourself and your conduct."

He sat, as it were, transfixed with astonishment. He breathed hard, and for a while

could not find his voice. Then he said, hoarsely : "Is this true—I mean about your meeting him in this way? You were not lunching with him?"

"Of course I was not lunching with him. Can it be possible that you would credit the first silly tale repeated to you, and that, acting upon it, you would intentionally offend Mr. Wayne and treat me so cruelly? And a story from Miss Bertram, too, of all people in the world! Miss Bertram—a scandal-monger by profession, a woman who lives by slandering others—a feminine vulture continually preying upon honest reputations! And it was for this trumped-up story that you spoiled my evening, my one evening, and made yourself a laughing-stock!"

So much genuine indignation lay in these passionate words that for a moment he was abashed. Had he been too hasty, after all? Had he acted like a fool and a brute? Had he been chasing shadows and invoking misery for nothing more than a stupid phrase

uttered by an unscrupulous woman? He felt that he must attempt some kind of self-justification, so he replied, with a faint degree of warmth: "It was not wholly that. Before I saw Miss Bertram I had forbidden you to have anything to do with Wayne, and five minutes later you were in his arms. That is what upset me."

Marion was sobbing now. "You have behaved outrageously," she said. Then, not waiting for a reply, she rose abruptly from the table, and fetching her work-basket, went into the study and sat down near the lamp, beginning desperately to mend Philip's socks. He followed her presently, agitated by remorse, and the sight of the socks in her hands touched him with a vague emotion.

"Marion," he ventured, standing behind her chair, "forgive me. I was wrong, but you do not understand what prompted me. You do not know how I hate that man. It is torture to me to see you even bow to him."

"That is the worst of it, Philip. I must suffer because you choose to harbor and cherish a prejudice. That is what angers me. Why can't you be frank? Why can't you tell me why you hate him?" She let her work drop into her lap, and fixed her eyes in a strained way upon the wall.

"It *is* a prejudice, very likely," he answered, evasively. "One never knows why one hates or loves. He inspires me with an unaccountable antipathy. But say you will forgive me and promise me one thing." He came from behind the chair and faced her. "See," he said, forcing the ghost of a smile, "I no longer command, I entreat."

"You have been greatly to blame—greatly," she replied, feeling that peace must be established. "But it is over now, so let us say no more. I hope this will be a lesson to you, and lead you to be less hard and hasty in the future, else there can be no possible harmony between us. What is it you wish me to promise?"

"That you will never speak to him—to Wayne again," he said, with suppressed eagerness.

"You are still unreasonable," she rejoined, coldly. "But if we are to remain at variance unless I comply, you leave me no choice in the matter."

He leaned toward her and gently kissed her forehead. "I have suffered terribly," he whispered. "But now it is over—yes, it is over."

She threaded her needle, keeping silence. She realized that her life had become a tissue of lies, deception, and disgrace; but she felt no contrition. She was daily growing more callous of conscience, and more intent upon yielding to passion. She thought with an indefinite elation of how rapidly and easily she had quieted Philip's distrust, but the recollection of his apparently groundless ill-feeling toward Wayne still irritated her. "I only need to keep my wits about me," she said, communing with herself, "then everything will run smoothly. But I can-

not endure living in an atmosphere of discord and bickering. I made a great mistake in asking Emily for that invitation; yet the ball without his presence would have been intolerable. Oh, how perplexing life is!"

Philip meanwhile sat down to write. As he took up his pen the bell rang, and in a moment Sarah entered with a letter, holding her apron between her greasy finger and thumb. His face instantly was aglow with expectation. "It's from the *Metropolitan Magazine*," he announced. "It's too slim to contain a manuscript. Can they really have accepted my essay?"

He turned the communication over in his hands, that trembled a little. Marion laid down the sock she was darning. "They must have accepted it," she said. "Open the letter. How slow you are! Why don't you open it?"

"Well, here goes!" and he dexterously slipped a paper-knife under the flap of the envelope. "A cheque, I declare!" he ex-

claimed joyfully, for the moment forgetting all else. "Fifty dollars for my essay! You remember it began with Charles Lamb. Fifty dollars! The slugger little knew what she was bringing me." He threw the cheque upon the table and began to read the letter. His head inclined forward so that the lamp-light illumined the pale-amber tints of his skin. "H'm—'Dear sir: We take pleasure in informing you,' and so forth. It seems I am in luck for once. Why don't you say something, Marion? Why don't you congratulate me?"

"I am not in the mood to congratulate anybody. You spoiled my one evening, and now you expect me to laugh because you have got fifty dollars. Look in that drawer and you will find three hundred dollars worth of bills. Much good your fifty dollars will do!"

"The money is yours, Marion. Take it! I owe you a reparation," he said, earnestly, and handed her the cheque across the table. She examined it carefully, with averted face.

"It will not give me the happiness I might have had!" she cried, passionately.

"I thought we had made our peace," he said. He picked up the pen, then threw it down again, and going to the window, raised the blind and looked out. Opposite, the façades of the houses were luminous with rows of light. There were a few faint white stars in the sky. He pressed his forehead close to the icy pane, and he too thought of wealth and what it might bring. "It is the want of money that is the worst possible curse," he mused. "If I were a rich man she would love me as she once did." He returned to the table, and for a while played with his pen absently. Then he read again the letter from the editor of the *Metropolitan*. Presently he said aloud, "I feel encouraged now to go on with my novel. Perhaps I might in time become a great writer, as great as Turgenief or Maupassant." Marion did not answer. She merely lifted her eyebrows incredulously, and plied her needle

diligently. He mixed some brandy and water and lighted a cigar. She took no part in his temporary success, and he felt this instinctively to be the case. It mattered little to her whether his essay was accepted or not. Before Wayne crossed her path Philip's trials had been her own. But she told herself bitterly that he had forfeited her sympathy; and her new love, fierce and impatient, had killed the old calm affection, as a burst of sunlight kills the feeble glimmer of a candle. "We must live together peaceably," she meditated. "That is imperative. And in order to do so I must lie and dissemble. That is imperative also."

After a while she got up and undressed for bed, leaving Philip absorbed in his writing, occasionally pausing to sip the brandy and water. But sleep was out of the question. One of Wayne's sonnets ran in her head. She tossed from side to side in the large bed, seeing with closed eyes the woman to whom the lines were addressed—see-

ing her in the delirium of madness, clutching the doctor's knees and begging for opium. "He will love me better," she thought, pressing her hands together under the coverings. The ribbon he had bound about his book was now run through the collar of her night-dress, and she twined the long ends caressingly around her fingers, courting sleep that would not come. She did not regret the falsehoods she had told Philip. Were it not that she burned with indignation against Miss Bertram, she would have put the incident entirely away.

Several days elapsed before she saw Wayne again. He called one afternoon and found her sitting listless and disconsolate in the study. She had not ventured to write to him, partly from a vague feeling of uncertainty, partly from a strong sentiment of pride. When she rose to greet him, however, her features were radiant with happiness. She began eagerly to tell him about Philip and the promise he had abstracted from her.

"I was obliged to say I would not speak to you any more," she said. "I hated to do it, but it was inevitable. I can't endure quarrelling. I must have peace, otherwise I should be tempted to kill myself. But oh, I have been so angry and unhappy! I have hated him. I have been filled with wicked and abominable thoughts."

"Well, don't think of it any more. Of course you did right to promise what he asked. It costs nothing to make promises, and he will never be the wiser. I have been thinking of you ever since the other night. I was sorry for you. I did not care for myself. But don't let us discuss your husband. We despise each other, of course."

"That is just what puzzles me. Why should he despise you? I can understand your dislike of him, but what can he possibly have against you, except envy and jealousy? He can have nothing else."

"I do not wish to talk about him. His reasons do not affect me in the least," re-

plied Wayne, unmindful of her questioning glance. "When shall we lunch together again—to-morrow?"

"Oh, I don't know. That scene at my sister's ball and the trouble it brought me, have upset me horribly. I seem to be in danger of something. I can't explain what, but I am afraid."

"It has made you nervous, I dare say. How I wish you belonged to me instead of to him. I should cherish you and love you so much that I should want you to be perfectly independent. That is the only love worth having. I should bind your heart and soul to mine. I should feel the intellectual and the spiritual influence, and I should not care what you did with your body. What does it matter what use is made of the body? Nothing of that sort can change the heart or the mind. It cannot alter character. That is how I feel about you, and for the first time in my life I can taste the joys of this higher love which commonplace people never expe-

rience or even understand. Now I shall tell you what you must do. We will lunch together to-morrow, but not at Delmonico's. I have a better plan to propose. My servant can prepare luncheon in my den. He will get everything. There is a restaurant two doors off. Then, when we have arranged it all I shall send him out for the rest of the day, and you will come. At what time do you think you could come? It must not be later than one o'clock."

She demurred for a moment, but she was too miserable and resentful not to feel an acute delight at the thought of revenging herself, so to speak, upon Philip by encouraging Wayne in whatever he might propose. "Very well, I will come," she said, presently. "Oh, I feel quite happy now. I should not mind anything if I could see you every day. I wish I had not married Philip. To have no money and to be bound to a man of his temperament is dreadful."

"Yes," he answered, "but the evil is

done now, and you can only mitigate it in one way—that is, by seeking happiness wherever you think you can find it. I will not believe it is obligatory upon anybody to suffer from a sense of duty. There is entirely too much false sentiment prevalent about this. Affection demands sacrifice sometimes, but sacrifice as a duty is degrading alike to the one who makes it and the one who accepts it. You have a perfect right to take all the joy you can get out of existence. You harm no one by so doing. You are entitled to love and to be loved. Why not?”

“Why not, indeed?” she echoed. “I have often heard papa say that. He would not blame me. I am sure he would not.” She spoke by and by of her mother, whom she could dimly recall. Then she described her life to him, her father’s former affluence, the old-fashioned house in Tenth Street with its Bohemian memories, the misfortune that had followed, and the bitter feeling existing between Mr. Hartly and Charles,

“My brother-in-law is a self-made man,” she explained. “His father kept a tailor-shop in Third Avenue, but now that he is rich nobody is good enough for him. He hasn’t an idea beyond money. He considers poverty a crime. He has no education to speak of, and he doesn’t admire cultivated people. He only admires dollars and cents. Emily is becoming gradually imbued with this mercenary spirit also. They will have nothing to do with papa because he gives literary parties. Only think of it! I don’t like the parties myself, the persons one meets there are disagreeable to me; still I can’t neglect my father, and whenever I think of the tailor in Third Avenue my blood boils.” She suddenly recollected Miss Bertram. “How beastly of that woman to tell Philip about our lunching together! If I had not had great presence of mind, I should have found myself in a dreadful scrape; but I will get even with her. I shall find some way. And after all I have done for her,

too! Getting her invitations, and telling her things to put in the paper. The mean, contemptible wretch!" He stroked her hand, and she fell into a sudden thoughtfulness of mood. "You cannot imagine," she resumed, at last, "how the life I have led has galled me. I shivered with disgust when I awoke in the morning. I shuddered when I went to bed at night—shuddered at the mere thought of another day. This cramped little flat fills me with loathing, and every time I go to my sister's, the contrast between her surroundings and mine appeals to me with additional force. I hate the sight of Sarah. When I hear her singing hymns in the kitchen I could kill her, and with it all I feel so helpless, so impotent. I ask myself why I must bear all this, for what reason am I condemned to be poor and obscure? Is it because I am not fit for anything better? Are the rich and powerful people invariably my superiors? No, they are not. Why then should I have nothing—enjoy nothing—why, why?"

She spoke in a tone of passionate excitement. "You see," she continued, more calmly, "I am telling you everything. I want you to know all there is to know. I have never spoken so frankly to anyone, not even to Emily. But I tell you now because you say you love me, and your love gives you the right to know everything—each shameful detail—each dishonorable thought—each abject motive. I do not seek to hide anything."

He bent over her tenderly, soothing her as he might have attempted to quiet a fractious child. "Listen, Marion," he said, "if my love entitles me to your full confidence, I will claim yet other privileges. I mean to be your friend in every respect so long as you will let me. Henceforth I shall live only to serve you."

She did not answer. Her eyes filled with tears that in a moment overflowed upon her cheeks.

X.

DURING the days that immediately followed she lived in an atmosphere of selfish gratification, giving herself up entirely to love and its dictates, sinking everything in a sort of beatified languor. She and Wayne met nearly every afternoon, and oddly enough, his infatuation appeared to be quite as intense as hers.

Emily had entered with Charles upon a round of fashionable dissipation, but she did not forget her sister, whom she liked to invite to dinner or the opera on account of her beauty and the attention she invariably attracted. But Wayne was never a member of one of these parties, and any pleasure apart from him interested Marion but little. She saw him sometimes talking to other women in the little red boxes of the Metro-

politan Opera House, and then a fierce discomfort would take possession of her, heightened by the ridiculous conversation of Charles, who had dropped Lord Chesterfield for a modern book of etiquette which he religiously studied and quoted. Marion never referred to Wayne in any way. Even in her confidential chats with Emily his name was not mentioned, and barring a slight reserve that still existed between Philip and his young wife, the disagreeable incident of the ball was to all appearance forgotten by them all. Of her father Marion rarely thought. He was no longer of her world. They had little in common now, but one day she recalled him to mind with something akin to self-reproach, and she resolved to go to see him.

Mrs. Von Spitzenheim, her face flushed from the heated atmosphere of the kitchen, came to open the door. Her black alpaca frock was protected by a large apron of checked calico, and her sleeves were rolled

above her pink elbows. She smiled on recognizing Marion, and began to pull nervously one of the buttons on her bodice, a habit she had when especially interested or excited. "Your father's at home, Mrs. Latimer," she said, in her strong guttural accent; "you can walk right in. The colonel and Miss Bertram are paying him a visit. The colonel prefers your father and Miss Bertram to anybody in the house. He doesn't care to associate with most people, but I do like to see him enjoying himself. He's such a superior man, the colonel! He's got the finest education; and his manners—well, I needn't tell you about his manners. You know! I'll bet his cousin the count, with all his money, can't hold a candle to him." She threw open the parlor door and thrust her frowsy head within. "Here's Mrs. Latimer come to see you, Mr. Hartly," she announced. She waved one coarse hand in a loving, sentimental manner to the colonel. "Oh, he's growing handsomer every day. I could sit

and look at him by the hour," she whispered to Marion, nodding significantly. Then turning away, she trod heavily along the hall to the basement stairs, screaming in piercing tones—"You Emma! I declare you've left a door open. Don't tell me you haven't. Can't I feel the cold wind coming up and blowing on my ankles? Shut that door this minute."

Marion, on going in, found her father in a dressing-gown of purple cashmere lined with quilted yellow satin, a relic of better days. He was walking up and down discussing one of his pet hobbies, while Miss Bertram and the colonel sat side by side on the green plush sofa that had recently come back from the Jew's. "If I had my way," he was saying, with both hands thrust into his pockets, "I would enforce more liberty in many ways. For instance, the barriers between the sexes! I should like to see them entirely removed. Nature never intended——" He stopped on perceiving his daughter. "Ah, Marion, come

in, my dear. I have been wishing you would call. I have something to show you. My shoe-fastener is now perfected. I've been working at it steadily for a whole month. I've applied for a patent. It is really the most ingenious thing! and there's no reason why I shouldn't make a fortune out of it. No reason whatever."

Marion had bowed with cold civility to Miss Bertram, who, although she noticed the scant courtesy of the greeting, pretended not to do so. "You're looking splendidly, Mrs. Latimer," she declared. "The colonel and I came in to visit your pa because we thought he might be able to give us a few items for *Facts*. I'm cleaned out, and so is the colonel. If I don't get half a column to-day goodness knows what will become of me. I shall have to invent some paragraphs out of whole cloth, and I hate to do that because it doesn't seem quite honest."

"The idea of your talking about honesty," said Marion, laughing maliciously. "Why,

almost everything you and the colonel have concocted for the past three months has been pure invention, or else a tissue of misrepresentations. You can't deny it."

Miss Bertram grew red in the face. "Well, I like that! that's a nice thing to say, after all the complimentary notices I've given you," she began, sitting upright. The colonel raised his beautifully kept hand. "Quite right, Mrs. Latimer," he murmured. "Generally speaking, it has been all lies from beginning to end, certainly. But what of that? You see, the wash-money is absolutely necessary."

Marion had dropped into a seat near the window overlooking the balcony. She looked out at the snow that the March wind was tossing into small drifts, and at a row of sparrows that sat huddled together on the railing. She drummed absent-mindedly with her gloved fingers upon her muff. Mr. Hartly came close beside her, holding the shoe-fastener in his outstretched hand.

“My dear, you shouldn’t say such impolite things to Miss Bertram,” he said. His white hair seemed even more silvery than usual above the orange lining of his downturned collar. “For my part, I regard journalism in any form as an honorable profession. What is the use of discussing probable legitimate or illegitimate methods? There will always be two opinions, just as there are always two opinions about everything. Let us drop the subject for a moment and speak of literature instead. I see that Philip has written an excellent essay for *The Metropolitan*. I have read and admired it. I always said he had talent, wonderful talent, and that his assured success was merely a question of time.” He patted his daughter’s cheek playfully. “You recollect the first time he came to Tenth Street and I was so pleased with him that I made him stay to dinner? And you liked him too, eh? almost a case of love at first sight. I said then that he had remarkable ability. You

remember I said so. Why doesn't he come to my "Evenings" sometimes? He never comes to see me any more. I should like to see him. He will have a great name one of these days."

"He cannot come very well. He devotes all his evenings to writing," replied Marion, removing her gaze from the window, and feeling a vague annoyance at her father's reminiscences. "He is growing old," she thought. "Old people can talk of nothing but what happened years ago. How tiresome and stupid!"

Mr. Hartly began to walk the floor again, pausing abruptly in front of Miss Bertram. "I tell you," he said, eagerly, "it is a great thing to have a daughter like Marion, and to know that she is married to a man I can respect. I selected her husband myself, in a way. I did everything to bring them together, though they never suspected it. True, they are not rich, but that makes no difference. I was rich myself once. Now I

have nothing, but you never see me down-cast or complaining. You never will. I live in my own thoughts, my friends, my books. I can always derive pleasure from these things." He buttoned his dressing-gown across his chest and drew the silken cord tighter about his waist. "But there is my other daughter, Mrs. Carter," he continued, in a changed tone. "That is the one great sorrow of my life. I may as well admit it. To think that my own child should turn against me—that is terrible! My own flesh and blood! and I was mother and father to my girls—mother and father. I did all I could. But Emily doesn't speak to me now." He resumed his walk, pacing the floor with long steps. He went to the chimney-piece and taking up a little box, deposited the shoe-fastener therein as carefully as though it had been a precious stone. Then he came back with his hands outspread appealingly. "Now I ask you if that is not a dreadful thing for a father? You see

Emily chose her husband. She was fond of having her own way, she has a will of iron. And after she was married, Charles insulted me horribly—he, the son of a common tailor! I could not overlook that, could I? No man with any pride could overlook that.” He let his hands fall again to his sides, and sat down in a chair that matched the sofa and was protected by several lace antimacassars. “I never thought,” he went on, “that Emily would treat me so. And it is all owing to that husband of hers. But it is over and done with. It is beyond recall—altogether beyond recall. Well, she is rich and has become a fashionable lady. I often see her name in the papers and I read descriptions of her gowns. I suppose she must be happy. And she has her boy! I feel sad sometimes when I think of the little child. I love him! I should enjoy having him here. I should like to take him out and show him the shops, and the animals in the park, and the curiosities in the museums.

But I never see him. He will grow up without hearing my name mentioned, perhaps." A huskiness veiled his voice. Marion moved uneasily on her chair. All at once he jumped up. "Why, I had forgotten the new piece I meant to play for you! I composed it the other day. Listen!" He walked to the piano and seated himself with his back toward them and played for a while. When he had finished he came forward, quite calm again, and continued the conversation. He laughed loudly. "One morning I was passing Emily's house, and I saw the child coming out with his nurse, and I took him in my arms and kissed him. He didn't know me; but would you believe it, the dear little fellow thrust his chubby hands into my hair, and smiled? Oh, I tell you the tie of blood is a wonderful thing! When I left him there was a big lump in my throat and I felt like crying. I said to myself—'Oh, you old fool!' That was true, wasn't it? ha, ha! Did you ever hear of such an old

fool?" He ceased to laugh, and presently sank into a brown study.

Miss Bertram leaned back upon the sofa in an easy attitude. "Can I put that in *Facts*? I'm sure I don't know what I shall do. I am at my wit's end."

"Now I think of it, I heard something the other evening," exclaimed the colonel, starting up. "I just remembered it a moment ago, when I was looking at Mrs. Latimer."

"For goodness' sake, what is it? Wait a moment till I get my note-book," and Miss Bertram began to dive into her pocket.

"Well, it's about that swell-looking poet. What's his name? You know him, Mrs. Latimer."

"You mean Mr. Wayne, I suppose," said Marion, coldly.

"Yes, that's the man—the fellow that dresses so beautifully and always poses. I never saw him when he wasn't posing. If he steps out of a street car, he puts on a grand air and manages somehow to make

everybody look at him. Well, it seems he is in love with a lady. He generally is in love with some woman. But this time it is a real lady, you understand. I heard it from a friend of mine who lives in the same house with Wayne. He has seen her stepping out of the elevator. He has seen Wayne's servant carrying in champagne and *pâté de foie gras* and all kinds of things. Oh, it's going to be a scandal one of these days !”

Marion grew hot and then like ice. She quivered from head to foot with rage and terror. “They cannot know. They surely cannot know,” she thought. For a moment she could not speak. A vertigo seized her and everything turned to mist. Finally she said, with a palpable effort, “And you mean to say that you will put that in *Facts*? You are capable of such meanness—such cowardice !”

Miss Bertram muttered something that was inaudible, and the colonel replied, “It

isn't me. Lord! I don't care. It's Miss Bertram. What difference does it make to me whether Wayne receives a lady or fifty ladies? I've other things to occupy me, I hope. It is only Miss Bertram."

"I'll put it in. I can work it up effectively," observed Miss Bertram, scribbling. "Of course I won't mention names. I don't want to get mixed up in a libel suit."

Marion was choking. Tears of anger and mortification stood in her eyes. "Oh, I'll make them suffer for this!" she thought. She dared not speak immediately, for fear she should betray herself. Mr. Hartly smoothed his dressing-gown affectionately.

"Wayne is a charming fellow, and he has written some exquisite sonnets. I prefer sonnets to any other form of verse, but I do not think he will last. He has made a wonderful reputation, but in a few years he will be forgotten. You see he drifted into notoriety—I will not say fame—too quickly. I wish I had discovered him. I would have

made a bigger name for him and a more stable one. I have produced lots of geniuses from the most discouraging and the crudest raw material you ever saw. Look at Philip Latimer! I found him by accident, but I said right away, 'The genius is here!' Oh, he is altogether a different sort from Wayne, but you haven't heard of him yet, because he hasn't had time to grow; but you will hear of him one of these days, and then you'll remember that I discovered him and predicted his greatness all along."

Marion had become more composed. She was able now to control her voice. "Don't put that horrid paragraph in," she said to Miss Bertram. "How can you bear to wound anyone needlessly? How can you deliberately hurt anyone who has never harmed you?"

Miss Bertram looked up sharply. The wild pain that quivered in Marion's voice was not lost upon her. "Oh, my dear," she answered, moistening the pencil with her

lips, "these things are not actuated by ill-feeling, not in the least." She wrote a few more words and shut the note-book up with a snap. Her green eyes shone with a peculiar light. "Why, I should go out of my way to-morrow to serve Mr. Wayne if I had the chance, simply because I admire him. But that has nothing to do with my writing little bits of gossip about him in *Facts*. That is business. It's a trade, and a mighty hard one, too. Personally I sit in judgment upon no one. I don't trouble myself; and ten minutes after I have written an item I've forgotten it. But I must live."

"Of course," assented Mr. Hartly, approvingly. "You do nothing maliciously, therefore you are not morally responsible. Anybody would admit that. It's as plain as day."

"Oh, certainly! as plain as day," echoed the colonel, twisting his moustache.

Marion rose. She could bear it no longer. "And what of the people you hurt and turn

into ridicule?" she asked, unsteadily. "It seems you leave them entirely out of your calculations. You do not stop to reflect upon the consequences of your 'gossip,' as you call it. Take this woman for instance—the woman you associate with Mr. Wayne—and whose name you do not even know. You will let the breath of scandal touch her—perhaps bring disgrace upon her—and for what—for what?"

Miss Bertram's eyes flashed again. "I thought so," she reflected. "She is the woman! I would swear she is the woman. She used to laugh when we wrote paragraphs, and now she is angry and afraid. I shall tell the colonel." She hesitated; then said, "All right, Mrs. Latimer. I'll leave it out since you appear to make a personal matter of it." At this the colonel burst into a fit of laughter. "Oh, really," he said, spasmodically, "one would think—yes, one would actually think——" his voice was lost in a roar of mirth.

“That reminds me of something that happened thirty years ago,” remarked Mr. Hartly. But at this Marion bade them abruptly good afternoon, and went out. “It was thirty years ago at least,” she heard her father say as she shut the door. She was still unnerved and trembling. “I spoke hastily,” she mused, walking rapidly toward home in the chill twilight. “But they were too insolent; and I am sure their rudeness was premeditated. I’ll never speak to them again if I can possibly help it. And papa—how old he is growing—how old and tiresome!”

An indefinite dread of coming misfortune assailed her and held her firmly in a pitiless grip. As her anger gradually evaporated she seemed to see herself at the mercy of a complicated series of incidents more painful and appalling than any she had yet experienced. For the first time since her lamentable yielding to temptation, she was weighted with a sense of the probable horrifying

consequences that might ensue. All about her threatening looks and menacing voices seemed to rise, and she sped quickly on in the descending darkness, like an evil-doer that flies from an avenging presence.

XI.

IN order to economize his time to the fullest possible extent, Philip often rose early and went down town while Marion still slept. He dressed quickly and quietly one morning, stepping across the floor from the washstand to the bureau on tiptoe, so as to avoid disturbing her, and groping for his clothes in the frigid obscurity of the room, for he did not open the shutters or turn on the steam. Having finished his toilet he went out softly, closing the door noiselessly. He sat down in the study and read what he had written the night before, criticising his feverishly executed composition with the calm spirit born of the early morning, cold and uncolored like the day itself. After all his discouragement and hardship it seemed that success was ultimately to be his. The

story *Dexter's* had so unceremoniously declined, had been accepted by a recently established weekly paper, and the money he had received for it he had given to Marion. It was but fitting, he thought, that everything he earned in this way should be hers. Had she not suffered poverty and disappointment as well as he, and had she not clung to him through it all—during these horrible years of care and deprivation?

His mind dwelt upon her with an unusual tenderness. They had had their differences and their quarrels, it was true, but on the whole they had been happy, despite the grinding worry and the innumerable petty miseries.

His coffee was waiting for him in the dining-room, and as he sipped it he meditated upon the fame that at last appeared to be within his reach. The novel he was writing he meant to offer to the new weekly as a serial. Several scenes connected with the story flitted through his brain while he was

putting on his overcoat in the hall and brushing his hat. Then, when he was half-way down the stairs he recollected that it was raining, and he ran back to get his umbrella. The narrow entry was almost in total darkness, so he opened the study door and began to search for what he wanted. As he did so he suddenly drew back with a curious expression. A tall stick of polished wood with a handle of hammered silver stood in the Japanese umbrella-stand, and without hesitation he took it out, examining it closely. Just then Sarah came from the kitchen into the passage, stamping heavily, and carrying a pail of water and a mop. She was astonished to see her master standing in the dim light as if turned to stone, a gray figure in the gray morning. She grinned as she said glibly: "That belongs to the gentleman who comes to see Mrs. Latimer. He left it in the study and I found it when I was brushing up. I put it in there for safe-keeping. I'll give it to him the next time he calls."

She disappeared into the dining-room, muttering an exclamation of impatience as the pail struck the wall and a portion of the soapy water was spilled upon the floor. Philip went into the study and shut the door. He still held the stick in his hand, and once more he looked at it attentively. He saw what he had failed to see before—a name and address engraved upon the silver. For a moment a frightful feeling of suffocation overcame him, and he seemed to be stifling for want of air. He sank into his chair beside the table, and unfastening his overcoat, threw it back, breathing hard, in long, detached gasps. His face was ashen, and once or twice his mouth twitched. He sat quite still for a time—it was an eternity to him—and gazed vacantly before him. The noises in the street reached him in vibrating echoes. From the kitchen he heard Sarah singing, “I’ve been redeemed,” and he tried to remember if he had not sung that very hymn himself when, as a boy, he had attend-

ed Sunday-school. The melody ran familiarly in his ears. All at once he forgot everything in the fierce physical agony that racked him from head to foot, succeeded by a deathly faintness. Great drops of moisture stood on his forehead and the objects in the room whirled about him in confused masses with obliterated outlines. He pressed both hands to his temples, pushing back the damp hair that clung to them. He saw the rain trickling down the vapory window-pane like tears against a white cheek. The heavy fog hid the opposite houses from sight. A street vender shrieked from below, and Philip leaned forward with every nerve strained to catch the words. After a time he made them out—"Oranges—twelve for a quarter." Then he thought it was not oranges the man cried, but bananas. Presently he ceased to think at all, and he smiled vaguely—a distorted, unmeaning smile. He moved his hand mechanically along the table until his finger-tips came into contact with the

stick. A frightful trembling shook him and his eyes had in them a gleam of madness. He staggered to his feet and took a few steps toward the bedroom. He made no attempt to enter, but stood panting and weak beside the closed door. He pictured to himself Marion lying asleep with one thin, pale hand beneath her cheek, the other resting on the coverlet like a lily leaf on snow. He clenched his fingers so that the blunt nails indented the palms. Then a sob escaped his lips, and his hands were reopened and dropped to his sides impotently. In a moment a violent frenzy took possession of him, and grasping the stick, he held it aloft as if he were about to rush into the adjoining chamber and strike his wife a deadly blow. But he reflected that it would be better, far better, to make her suffer a slow, corroding torture—a gradual increase of bitter anguish of mind and body that would eventually destroy her. He felt a murderous impulse in his heart. Every tender

feeling was dead within him. In a few brief moments he had become brutalized. Finally the horrible paroxysm passed, and turning away he replaced the stick where he had found it, and crept down the stairs limply, like one who has been crushed by a ponderous stroke from a heavy implement. At his desk in the editorial rooms of the *Evening Messenger*, he remained for an hour or two trying to do his work. He began to write, then stopped because he could not find the proper expressions. He would leave a sentence unfinished, being unable to remember the particular idea that had inspired it. He forgot how to spell the simplest words, and was obliged to hunt for them in the dictionary. He heard and saw nothing of what was passing around him. His hands and feet were cold as ice, while his head burned hotly. In a little while he complained of feeling ill and told his official superior that he was going home. He did not however return to the apartment-house, but boarded

a Sixth Avenue car, and went to Central Park, where he walked to and fro over the soaked ground with the rain drenching him to the skin. His physical sensations were deadened. He was alike indifferent to the penetrating cold and the dense moisture. He thought of Marion and Wayne, and as he contemplated his outraged trust, his shipwrecked love, his suddenly crushed ambition, an intense hatred filled his breast and cried aloud for material expression. For the time being he thirsted for revenge. He tried to fathom ways and means. He strove to recall to mind stories he had read wherein frightful schemes of retaliation were forcibly depicted, but his thoughts wandered in spite of his efforts to concentrate them. He could fix his mental attention upon nothing. He must wait and invent some plan when he was more composed and able to meditate and devise calmly. The opportunity would come in time, and the inspiration would not be wanting. Once he sat down on one of the

park benches under a tree whose naked branches shed a shower of glistening drops upon him, and with the thick mist wetting his face. He sat and thought of his life, and a series of distorted events rose before him like hideous dream-pictures. A dull wonder at the thought of his ever having been a good man impressed him. Could it be possible that only a short time ago he had been actuated by high principles, by courage, and noble aspiration? What did these things matter to him now? At present he had neither courage nor aims beyond the vengeance born of his blighted life, his shattered confidence. He recollected the scene he had had with Marion after Emily's ball. He recalled the falsehoods she must have told him, and he cursed himself for his blind stupidity. How wickedly she had lied to him and deceived him! Could he ever put faith in a human creature again? If she was false, how could he believe in anyone? How could he believe in God? Each time that

this question confronted him his brain grew confused, and he fancied himself surrounded by blackness peopled with the malignant shades of Murder and Suicide. Suddenly he laughed aloud. He remembered Marion as she often sat in the evening beside the lamp, darning his socks and mending the linen. At every stitch she doubtless thought of Wayne. Then the whole thing appeared to him as unreal—impossible. It was some nightmare from which he would probably soon awake. By and by he rose and continued his walk aimlessly, as one deprived of all reasoning powers.

The street lamps were lighted when he turned his steps in the direction of home. Night was beginning to envelop the sombre sky with yet deeper tints. The gas jets pierced the mists in wavering spots of flame. As he approached the apartment-house a familiar figure emerged from the entrance and passed on in an opposite direction. Philip's heart leapt wildly, then seemed to

stand still, while his knees almost gave way beneath him. But he made a supreme effort and went into the house, erect and outwardly composed, and climbing the long flights of stairs, opened the door with his latch-key and stepped into the study with a strange smile on his face. Marion lay with her blonde head thrown back against the dull blue of the easy chair. She looked up with a startled air as he appeared. The room was dim with falling shadows, but she saw his rain-soaked clothes and noted the set expression of his features. A horrible anxiety overcame her. "He has met Harold at the door," was her first thought, and for an instant a feeling of nausea crept through her, accompanied by so intense a fear that she could not speak. He also remained silent, facing her with a steady gaze that he suddenly withdrew. Presently she found her voice.

"What is the matter, Philip? Has anything happened?"

“Nothing, except that I am ill,” he answered briefly.

She got up and came toward him, and laid her hand upon his arm. At the touch he shuddered and drew back. “How did you get yourself into such a state?” she asked. “You are dripping wet. Where have you been?”

“Walking in the Park,” he answered. After a pause he said—“I fancied the air might do my head good. I have had a fever all day.”

“Did you have it early this morning?”

“Yes,” he replied, and went into the bedroom to change his clothes. She drew a long breath of relief. “He knows nothing,” she reflected. “Of course he knows nothing; but he looks very ill.” All at once another thought occurred to her. “If he should die I could marry Harold.” She smiled, for her momentary apprehension had vanished. She busied herself in arranging some of the papers on the littered table. Then she

pulled down the blinds and lighted the lamp with a steady hand. She heard Philip walking about in the bedroom. Once he called Sarah in a firm, clear tone and asked for a freshly ironed shirt. "Of course he knows nothing," she repeated. "But if he had come home a moment earlier they would have met." She turned pale at the idea. "It is not safe for Harold to come here," she thought. "I must tell him not to come again."

In spite of her restored self-confidence, she was nevertheless haunted by a nameless dread. Her mind had been unsettled and uneasy ever since her last visit to her father, when Miss Bertram and the colonel had behaved so strangely. She had spoken of this to Wayne, but he had only laughed in his careless fashion, saying: "Well, what does it matter what they think or say? Suppose they should discover everything, what then? We should love each other just the same. Nothing can alter that."

These words helped in a measure to reassure her. But during the evening, as she watched Philip's futile attempts to write, and noted the absorbed, preoccupied expression of his haggard face, consternation again assailed her.

"You should see the doctor, Philip," she said, not looking up from her sewing, yet somehow observing his every glance and gesture. "You are hurting yourself by overwork. No constitution could stand the strain of so many hours' close attention to business and study. You will end by being seriously ill if you are not careful."

He made no answer. He paced the floor for a while with both hands thrust into his pockets, his head bowed upon his breast. Once he stopped to take a book from the shelf, and he tried to read. But he saw nothing on the printed pages except Wayne's name that seemed written in letters of blood. He put the volume back again and mixed some brandy and water, holding the bottle

up to the light to see how much remained. He thought, "I must buy a fresh bottle to-morrow, but I will try a different brand." By and by he took the scissors from Marion's work-basket and began carefully to trim his nails.

She made no attempt to carry on any conversation, for she perceived that it would be useless. But later, when she gathered up her work and went to bed, she was glad to see that his features were bent over his manuscript, while his pen moved swiftly along the blank pages that he feverishly tossed aside as he finished them one by one.

Animated by an impatient desire to disperse, if possible, her unpleasant self-communings, she went to Emily's on the following day, at the luncheon hour. Charles was at home, and the baby had been brought down and seated on a high chair made of fancy wicker-work and ornamented with rosettes of blue ribbon. Emily looked wan and faded from want of a proper amount of

sleep and from prolonged dissipation. Her complexion had a yellow tinge, and when she smiled crow's-feet formed about her eyes; she appeared peevish and fretful. Charles as usual talked of money.

"I've had the most extraordinary luck lately," he said, leaning his elbows on the table. "Everything I touch turns to gold. It makes no difference what the venture is. It has become a proverb in the Street. They say to a fortunate speculator, 'You've got Carter's luck.' I tell you it is wonderful." He pinched the baby's cheek. The child was a miniature likeness of himself. "Well, Charlie, you'll be a millionaire one of these days. You'll be the biggest matrimonial catch in New York. The amount of money you will have will be something enormous. He knows it already," added Charles, turning to Marion. "He knows he is rich, although he can't talk plainly. What do you think he said to Thomas the other day? Well, Thomas brought him some soup, carry-

ing the plate in his hand. The baby waved him away and said, 'Silver salver!' and Thomas was so astonished that he nearly dropped the plate. But he got the salver and handed the soup to the child properly. Oh, you have no idea how clever that boy is! He knew Thomas had no business to hand him a plate of soup in that fashion. Ha, ha! if you could have seen the expression on his face when he waved Thomas away, you would have died."

The baby's mouth expanded into a grin. He had a dim notion that he was being extravagantly commended. "He's got two hundred dollars in gold in his toy-bank," Charles continued, still laughing, "and he amuses himself by rolling the pieces over the floor. The nurse gets scared to death for fear he will lose some of them, and that she will be accused of stealing. But he isn't afraid. He knows he can get plenty more." The child nodded his head understandingly. "Yes, plenty more," he repeated.

“What is Philip doing now?” inquired Emily, with languid interest. “I heard he had written something very clever for the *Metropolitan Magazine*. I haven’t read it. I have no time to read nowadays. But I can’t help thinking how much better it would be for you if he were on the Street like Charles. There would be some chance then of his making money.”

“He wouldn’t care about it. His tastes are purely literary. He will never make any money, I’m afraid. And of late his health appears to be breaking down. I am greatly worried, for of course if he should fall ill we should be in desperate straits.”

“What a little goose you were to marry him!” cried Charles. “What does his writing amount to? anybody can write. Anybody can be an author after a little practice, but it takes brains to coin money. Who cares nowadays whether you can scribble stories or not? The point is—how much money have you got? nothing else matters.”

He glanced complacently round the room. The baby stared with open mouth, then he whispered to himself the word "money" several times, as if trying to familiarize himself with the sound. Emily asked, in an indifferent tone, whether Marion had lately seen Mr. Hartly.

"Yes, I was there the other day. He has aged a great deal. He talks only of what happened years ago. That is a sure sign of failing powers both physical and mental. I did not remain with him long, because his reminiscences were so dull and stupid."

"Naturally he must be growing old. Does he ever speak of me?" Emily said, sipping her claret.

"Yes, that is the worst of it. He tells everybody how shamefully you and Charles have treated him. He goes over the whole story again and again."

"Well, I don't care much what he says about us. The chief trouble is that he will persist in being disreputable. Why can't

he behave decently instead of being a disgrace ? ”

“ If you are going to drag in the family skeleton, I’m off ! ” exclaimed Charles loudly, rising from his chair and, as usual, flinging his napkin upon the seat, whence Thomas gravely removed it. “ I don’t want to hear anything about your father. It won’t make matters any better to sit here and discuss him. I’m tired of your father and his ways.” He strode out of the dining-room without leave-taking, as was his custom. But presently, when the two sisters were alone together, Emily resumed the subject somewhat diffidently. “ One thing more, Marion. Does he ever speak of me as if he cared—I mean affectionately ? ”

“ He seems to regret not seeing the baby. Why don’t you send the child to him occasionally ? it would do no harm.”

“ Charles would not permit it,” replied Emily, coldly ; and then the matter was dropped.

XII.

YIELDING to Wayne's entreaties, Marion had promised to spend an entire day in his company. They intended driving into the country beyond King's Bridge and taking luncheon in an old colonial inn that stood back from the road near a sombre grove of trees just budding into life. The season was already far advanced. The city was brilliant with the white and yellow flowers of early spring. The bleak winds of March had given way to the balmy dew-swept air of April. Occasionally a flock of birds floated across the pale sky, and the sun was infused with a languid warmth.

Marion looked forward to this particular day with all the eager impatience of a girl who keeps a first rendezvous with her lover. Her impulse on waking was to run to the

window and pull open the shutters, dreading to see rain or fog. But the morning was resplendently beautiful. Philip had already gone to the office, and she stood for a while with a happy smile on her parted lips, her hands clasped, thinking of the enchantment to come. The heavens were radiantly azure. Faint wreaths of smoke rose here and there over the house-tops. The slender spires of the cathedral glistened in the light. The breeze blew the garments suspended from clothes-lines on the roofs of the neighboring tenement-houses, into weird, fantastic shapes. A shirt inflated with wind, so that it bulged in grotesque proportions, reminded her forcibly of Charles.

Wayne was coming in his dog-cart at ten o'clock to fetch her. She had cautioned him about visiting her openly, so on this occasion it had been agreed that he should meet her at the door of the apartment-house.

As she dressed herself in the trim cloth gown that Emily had recently given her, she

thought with a strange feeling of unrest of Philip. His changed manner had in it now something that appalled her. Ever since that fatal evening when he had come home rain-drenched and complaining of fever, his behavior had at times been so odd and unnatural that she often grew terrified. He rarely addressed her ; and when she spoke to him, he generally failed to answer. He went to his daily toil as usual, and in the evening wrote desperately at his novel. He did not appear to be ill, and his facility in literary composition was never more marked. His intellect, indeed, seemed stirred into vigorous life. On the whole, his conduct suggested a man whose entire being was concentrated upon the solving of some problem whose gradually increasing difficulties constantly assailed him with doubt and a torturing suspense. Occasionally, he appeared to lose consciousness of his surroundings and would sit plunged in abstracted meditation, his face wearing an expression

that was almost diabolical in its fixed intensity. Then, overcome by fear, she would fancy his mind was becoming unsettled, and she pictured to herself her probable course of action, should she awaken in the night to find him bending over her to take her life in a sudden frenzy of madness. Often he had the preoccupied manner of one who waits and watches for a long-expected event—a sort of settled calm, kindling to eagerness, that dispelled her apprehension only to give rise to a more complicated dread.

But in spite of all this, she rarely allowed her reflections to dwell for long upon Philip. Her love for Wayne engrossed her entire soul to the rigid exclusion of everything else. Her existence was colored by nothing beyond herself and the object of her passion. Outside of this purely personal realm nothing interested her. At times, she thought she would gladly risk scandal and brave the world's censure for her love's sake. She had even considered the possibility of leav-

ing Philip after boldly declaring her preference for another. The very idea of her marital bondage stung and exasperated her. Now and then she looked at him thinking, "If the opportunity would only come, so that I might free myself! I do not care how—through discovery, or death—it does not matter, so long as I gain my liberty." But that stern, imperturbable countenance that haunted her by day and confronted her by night, never for a moment relaxed its grim firmness, and this irritated her the more, inciting her to open rebellion, that for some indefinable reason, however, she strove to check.

The dining-room clock struck half-past nine. Marion buttoned her tightly-fitting bodice before the mirror, while Sarah labored with the mattress, her face red from the exertion. The bed-room was permeated with a greasy odor, for the communicating doors had been left open, and fumes of frying fat came in from the kitchen.

“Go and shut those doors,” Marion said, imperiously. “The smell nauseates me. I have told you a thousand times to keep the doors closed.”

She took the bottle of eau de Cologne and sprinkled some of its contents in the air, afterward saturating her handkerchief with the fluid. Sarah left the room, grumbling in a wordless monotone. Three doors slammed noisily. Presently the servant came back with a telegram that had just arrived. At the sight of the buff envelope Marion’s heart sank. “He cannot come. I shall lose my beautiful day!” she thought, pulling the wrapper off with unsteady fingers. But a rapid glance at the signature caused her to draw a breath of relief. The message was not from Wayne. It was from Miss Bertram and read, “Come at once. Your father is very ill.”

Marion went into the study with the paper in her hand. She was both disappointed and annoyed. How provoking of her father

to fall ill on this particular day ! Yet nothing serious could be the matter ! Of course not. Probably a cold, or some sudden weakness. At his age such things were to be expected. When she had seen him a few days ago he had been quite well. If she were to renounce her contemplated pleasure and go to him at once, in all likelihood she would find him sitting up and chatting composedly with Miss Bertram and the colonel, or composing something on the piano, and she would have sacrificed her enjoyment for naught. She sat still for a while, deliberating, with knit brows and compressed lips. Then she crushed the despatch in her hand so that it resembled a ball, which she tossed upon the table among Philip's papers.

In a few moments she called Sarah and bade her inspect the thermometer that hung outside the dining-room window. "If it is less than sixty I will wear my fur boa," she said, arranging her veil of dotted lace.

"Well, ma'am," Sarah said, after pro-

longed study of the thermometer, "it looks to be about fifty-eight; so I'd advise you to dress warm. There's no end of pneumonia and all kinds of diseases flying round, and people are dying by scores."

Marion drew the boa about her neck and went downstairs to join Wayne, her features aglow with excitement.

Of late, Philip rarely sat an entire day at his desk in the editorial rooms of the *Evening Messenger*, as had formerly been his custom. A wonderful alteration in his habits and demeanor had come over him since that gray morning when he had so unexpectedly discovered his wife's treachery. He resolved, however, to do nothing hastily. He thought and planned continually, viewing the situation in every light, contemplating its horror and agony unflinchingly, and bent upon finding or devising a proper course of action. Day after day, he made resolutions only to cast them finally aside as impracticable. But his purpose was not the less in-

flexible on this account, and it lost nothing of its fierce and bitter cunning. He had grown hard, cruel, and pitiless. Every trace of tenderness and generosity had left him. He was stolidly indifferent. Sometimes while busy at his work, in which he sought to forget his own misery and Marion's shame, the sublime sense of both would come over him with such intolerable force that his head grew dizzy, and throwing down his pen, he would rush into the open air and traverse street after street, blindly, yet crushed by a weight of degradation and despair. Then indecision and doubt would assail him, rendered more poignant by the apparent necessity for immediate action. He had come to hate life, to despise himself, to regard his existence merely as a means to an end. Concentrated upon his scheme for revenge, he likened himself to a solitary living figure in a world of mists and shadows. He prayed unceasingly for some opportune occasion, some chance that would enable him to assert

his manhood and crush those who had wantonly trifled with his best feelings, his honor, his highest endeavors.

On the morning when Marion had gone with Wayne to the country, Philip was unusually disturbed. He was possessed by a thought that the crucial moment for which he had waited was approaching. He wrote for a time, then went out to luncheon, and when the brief meal was over, instead of returning to the office, he turned his steps in the direction of home, impelled thereto by a vague impulse for which he was unable to account. His mind, however, was often bent upon surprises. He courted the unexpected and cajoled the unforeseen.

In the apartment silence reigned. Sarah had gone out for the day, taking advantage of her mistress' absence. The blinds were drawn up in the study, revealing the rain-washed panes gleaming in streaks and splashes. The pale afternoon sun flooded the room, showing the dust that had accumulated

in the corners and floated in the air. A bouquet was withering on the chimney-piece and exhaled a dry, musty odor. The carpet was strewn with papers and scraps of torn letters. The unwashed tumbler beside the brandy bottle was overturned among the cigars. He arranged the window-shades and passed into the other rooms. They were dark and vacant. He wondered with a peculiar curiosity where Marion had gone; and he smiled, thinking how odd and significant it would be should she return with Wayne, not expecting her husband to be at home. His smile died away to give place to a feeling of acute rage. He clenched his fist, and a cold perspiration broke out upon his forehead. "I would kill him!" he murmured, under his breath.

A sudden idea came to him to take advantage of his sole presence in the apartment, and search for proofs of Marion's faithlessness. He started to look in the unlocked drawers of the dressing-table, first throwing open the

shutters and letting in the light. He saw the book of poems lying half hidden beneath a pile of ribbons and laces, and he held it for a moment in his hands. He breathed quickly and closed his eyes. Then he replaced the volume, and shut the drawer with a shudder. "This is cowardly," he reflected. "Not only that—it is unmanly," and he went back again to the study.

He sat down and began to put his papers in order. The editor of the *Metropolitan Magazine* had asked him to write a serial story, agreeing to pay him a thousand dollars for the manuscript. Had this happened six months ago, how wonderfully elated he would have been! He imagined Marion's delight. Like two happy children, they would have made hundreds of plans, unfolded, one by one, scores of aspirations. Now he considered his good fortune phlegmatically. He glanced at what he had written—five chapters in all—and asked himself whether it would be worth while to

complete it. The money that he actually needed seemed as dross. He counted the pages listlessly. Then it was that he caught sight of the crumpled ball of paper tossed carelessly by Marion upon the table. For a moment he let it lie unheeded. Presently, seeing that it was a telegram, he picked it up, straightened out the creases, and held it to the light, his brain all at once inflamed by fresh and violent suspicion. He read the message once—twice—three times—and dropped it gently. A flush suffused his face. His eyes filled with tears. An entirely new order of thought took possession of him. "She must have gone to him," he said. "Poor old man!"

He put on his coat and went out. As he walked toward Lexington Avenue, his mind teemed with recollections of Richard Hartly—his generosity, his innate nobility of character. "I owe him everything," Philip reflected. "It was he who spoke the first encouraging word. It was he who gave me what little happiness I have had."

Mrs. Von Spitzenheim as usual opened the door, flushed, weary, and anxious. The long corridor was infested with gloom and chilled with a strange, unnatural silence. She looked relieved on seeing Philip, and her thick lips framed a question.

“Mrs. Latimer is not with you?”

“Is she not here? She has been here, surely,” he stammered.

“No. We have waited since morning. A telegram was sent. He has asked for her continually.”

Philip's head swam. His face was set and ghastly as he moved unsteadily toward the parlor and entered. Mrs. Von Spitzenheim followed him, treading on tiptoe, her immense feet clad in prunella slippers and ornamented with huge rosettes, fully visible from beneath her short alpaca skirt. His lips were dry, and his eyes burned brightly. “When and how was he taken ill?” he inquired, allowing his gaze to wander indifferently about the room.

"This morning, very suddenly. He was sitting at the piano, playing, when he must have fallen to the floor, unconscious. Miss Bertram came in to see if she could get some items for her paper, and found him lying there. The doctor was summoned and revived him temporarily. We sent for both his daughters, but neither has come yet."

"And his condition?" Philip asked, in a low voice. "Is it serious?"

Mrs. Von Spitzenheim raised her eyebrows and shoulders. "It is death," she answered, laconically, and led the way, still walking on tiptoe, to the back room.

Philip struggled with the bitterness that threatened to overmaster him. Out of the dimness of the bed-chamber a thin, angular figure, that of the physician, rose and advanced a step. Mr. Hartly lay with closed eyes, in bed, his back to the wall, his beautiful white hair gleaming against the dull white of the pillow.

"He is conscious?" Philip whispered,

suddenly impressed by a strong sentiment of pity.

“Yes, but the end may come at any moment.”

“Leave us together,” said the young man, briefly.

The physician bowed. “The interview must be a short one. He has no strength to waste. I will come back in a few minutes.” He beckoned to Mrs. von Spitzenheim, and withdrew with her to the parlor, softly closing the folding-doors whose large panels of ground-glass let in a mild brightness from the outer room.

For a space Philip stood in the semi-obscurity and looked tranquilly at the motionless figure of his father-in-law, who presently seemed to divine the advent of someone he had longed to see. His fine eyes opened eagerly and he lifted one hand.

“Marion !” he said.

There was something so appealing in the faint tone, that tears rushed unbidden to

Philip's eyes. The room with its plain, almost shabby, details became suddenly obscured. He sank into a chair by the bedside and turned his face away, unable to speak.

"Where is Marion! why doesn't she come?" the weak voice demanded from the shadows. Then Philip summoned strength to reply.

"She cannot come," he answered, hoarsely. "At least, I fear she cannot."

"Ah, that is you, Philip! I am glad to see you—very glad. Are you seated? have you got a comfortable chair? Yes? That is right. Is Marion ill herself that she does not come?"

Philip was suffocating. He sat upright, staring into the grayness with a fixed, stony expression.

"Yes," he finally said, in a cold, negative accent.

"But she sent me a message? what did she say?"

“She said—I was to give you her love. She will try to come later—by and by.”

The old man moved his head from side to side upon the pillow, and for a few seconds silence reigned. “Philip,” he said presently, “give me your hand,” and the young man’s cold fingers crept about the hot, dry palm on the coverlet.

“I am going to die, Philip. This is the end, I know it is the end. How mysterious it seems! How vague and mysterious! yet I am not afraid. I should be quite happy, I think, if I had my girls by me. Marion, you say, is ill—and Emily?”

Philip’s heart was ready to burst. A quivering emotion surged within him. His hand clutched that of the sick man with a closer pressure. “I do not know. She will come soon, I dare say. Do not distress yourself,” he said.

“She will forget and forgive when she sees me,” pursued Mr. Hartly. “She is not bad at heart. She loves her old father still.

I will hold out my arms to her and everything will be forgotten—the harsh words, the unkind thoughts, everything! I can go with a clear conscience. I never wronged a human being. I have lived my life for others. I have been a father and mother to my girls—father and mother.”

“I, too, owe you everything,” murmured Philip. “And I thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

“I gave you the best I had,” said Mr. Hartly, with a flickering smile illuminating his pale features. “I gave you my Marion. She has been a good wife to you, Philip, hasn’t she?” Philip made no answer. He was choking. It was as if a steel band grasped his throat with deadly force. He suddenly withdrew his fingers from the old man’s, and clasped both hands together convulsively.

“Why don’t you speak, Philip? I was asking about Marion. She has been a good, true wife to you?”

Philip's jaw dropped. He unlocked his hands and let them fall limply. "Yes," he said, and the monosyllable, nearly inaudible though it was, resembled a gasp of atrocious agony.

"And you love each other truly and devotedly?"

"Assuredly."

A sigh, light as a passing breath, rose from the pillows. "I have had only one sorrow, one great sorrow," resumed Mr. Hartly, speaking now in detached sentences. "I mean Emily—that she should turn against me—for nothing—a mere whim; but of course it is all over now, and she will come to her poor old father's arms and put her cheek against mine as she used to do when she was a little child. We were so happy in the old days in Tenth Street! I loved them dearly. I wish they would come. I can't die without seeing my girls, and I'm afraid I shall not last much longer."

Another pause. The shadows lengthened

and deepened. The ground-glass panels in the door lost their sheen and took on a tinge of opaque gray. In a moment Mr. Hartly continued. "I have loved you, Philip, as I might have loved my own son. I have admired your talent. Some day—you will be great—I should like to see you and Marion enjoy your fame—but I cannot. You will think of me, though. I am sure you will think of me."

"Yes, oh, yes! As if we could ever forget!" the young man murmured, indistinctly.

"There is one thing more, Philip. Promise me—promise me—that you will always be the same to her—always the kind, careful husband—the husband I gave to her. She has been a good daughter—a true wife. But she is young—and when I am gone—it may be—well, you know what I mean. Promise me that you will stand by her always—no matter what happens. You will be faithful unto death."

Then Philip lifted a blanched, distorted countenance and strained eyes to the gloom. Two tears fell upon his cheeks and dried there. A vertigo seized him. He longed to cry aloud, "I cannot promise! your daughter is not what you suppose! she is false, deceitful, selfish, dishonorable!" but the impulse died away upon his lips. He forgot the woman and the man, and saw nought except the father. He shifted his gaze in a dazed sort of way. All at once, he rose from the chair, and extended both his arms in tremulous supplication. In the hushed atmosphere of the chamber Mr. Hartly's voice sounded almost full and clear.

"Promise—faithful unto death——"

"Faithful unto death, so help me God!"

Philip's arms fell nerveless to his sides. He reeled backward and staggered against the chair. Mr. Hartly smiled.

The doors were pushed aside. The ground-glass panels slid into the woodwork and reappeared again, leaden-colored. The

doctor entered. For an hour not a word was spoken. Philip sat with his head dimly outlined upon the pale lilac wall-paper. His eyes were shut, his brows knit as if with pain, his features rigid and white like marble—a mute, inanimate figure. From time to time the old man stirred slightly and looked about in a bewildered manner. He breathed heavily. In a little while Mrs. Von Spitzenheim brought in a shaded lamp and placed it upon the table. Its feeble gleam illumined the room with narrow bars and patches of light that quivered amid the shadows. Occasionally the doctor got up, felt the patient's pulse, and resumed his seat, waiting calmly for the end. Once he pulled out his watch, consulted it, and yawned. The end came even sooner than had been expected. Toward five o'clock, Mr. Hartly's difficult breathing deepened into a snore. He opened his eyes vaguely. He tried to speak, and finally muttered, gasping for air—"Philip—the child—Emily's child—don't

let him forget—and tell my dear girls—that I——”

The sounds vanished in an inarticulate murmur. Philip started to his feet. Mr. Hartly's head rolled from side to side. His eyes were upturned and glassy. His open mouth twitched spasmodically, then settled into grimness. The ashen skin became yellow. The fingers stiffened. The doctor advanced and in a business-like way, straightened the limbs and drew the sheet up over the face.

XIII.

PHILIP hardly knew what thoughts possessed him as he traversed the streets in the gathering dusk. Through the pale neutral-tinted haze the illuminated disk of a clock marked the hour of six. Mechanically, he drew out his watch and compared it with the larger time-piece. His mind turned to reflections on life and death, and the dead face of Mr. Hartly seemed to pursue him through the dimness. He failed to observe the throngs of men and women that passed him, jostling each other, talking in the high-pitched voices that the continual uproar of our thoroughfares renders obligatory, often vociferating in their haste to proceed and their impatience of delay. In the middle of Broadway, a couple of heavily-laden trucks had come into violent collision, and on each

side stretched a long blockade of cars. The drivers of the vehicles were filling the air with loudly-uttered curses, glaring at one another like wild beasts and brandishing their whips. A crowd of interested spectators stood on the sidewalk—a sea of grinning mouths that expanded now into cheers and yells of delight, now into profanity at every fresh oath or threat from the principal actors in the scene. An Italian girl bareheaded and wearing long brass earrings, accosted Philip and offered him an evening paper, but he motioned her so rudely away that she broke into tremulous maledictions, shaking her brown, skinny hand in his face. A train on the Elevated crashed by leaving behind it a trailing line of vapor that obscured the sky. A drunken woman, followed by a dozen jeering street Arabs, reeled slowly along Sixth Avenue. Her battered straw hat, ornamented with a grotesque green feather and a pink flower, hung about her neck by a limp string. Her dress was bespattered with the

black mud of the gutter, and a great bloody gash on one cheek added to the repulsiveness of her appearance. One of the boys, bolder than the rest, picked up a stone and hurled it at her head. It struck the scant braids of hair where combined grease and dirt vied for supremacy. The woman hitherto had paid no attention to her tormentors, but at this fresh affront she turned sharply, and seized the offender. "Take that, you filthy varmint!" she shrieked, beginning to scratch his face with her nails. A wild scene of confusion ensued. Scream upon scream arose. The woman lost her balance, but not relaxing her hold upon the boy, they rolled together into the reeking foulness of the street, where mire, offal, and refuse exhaled a fetid odor. Somebody gave the warning cry of "police!" and in a moment a guardian of the peace came running to the spot, flourishing his club. Several heavy blows were dealt right and left. The crowd scattered. A few curses, and bursts of derisive

jocularly lingered. Then comparative silence ensued.

Already the western horizon was brilliant with amber and rose. The lamps flared in points of yellow. The gloom took on a white splendor from an occasional electric light. Philip continued to walk aimlessly, his fixed eyes saw nothing but the ghastly features of the dead man. He remembered how his father-in-law had scoffed at God. Well, he had been quite right. There was no God. What had God ever done for *him*? Nothing. The idea of a deity that resembled a loving father was too absurd. No, there was no God. Religion was a mere nursery tale. A tender, merciful Providence, was simply a chimera of superstitious brains. It was monstrous to contemplate in fancy a God that could willingly suffer such atrocities, such injustice, such boundless horrors as made up the daily routine of life on this wretched planet to go on unchecked. He tried to recollect the last time he had been

foolish enough and credulous enough to pray. But his memory failed him. He knew however that it must have been long ago—in his boyhood, perhaps. Prayer upon his rebellious lips, or even in his aching heart, would now be the bitterest of mockeries. Suddenly the promise he had made flashed across him. Would he be able to keep it? Would it be right for him to do so? He stood still on the corner of the avenue and closed his eyes as one who seeks to collect wandering senses. In a little while he glanced at the lamp-post above his head, trying to decipher the number of the street. He had not noticed before where he was. He began to walk toward home, wondering vaguely whether Marion had returned and what he should say to her when they met. He looked furtively about on reaching the door of the apartment house. No one was in sight except the ragged figure of an accordion-player who crouched on the curb-stone and languidly drew forth plaintive sounds from his wheez-

ing instrument. Philip mounted the stairs, and a smile crossed his face, which was set into ashen grinness. Once he leaned against the balustrade and drew a deep breath.

As he stepped into the study his wife came to meet him. She wore her hat and jacket, and seemed on the point of going out. The room was uncomfortably warm from the steady influx of steam, and the atmosphere was rendered doubly suffocating by an immense bouquet of violets that stood on the table. Philip strode to the window and threw it open without a look in Marion's direction. But he heard her light step behind him, and finally her voice in a troubled accent.

"I am glad you have come, Philip. I have received a message stating that papa is ill. I was thinking of going to him at once. We can wait until after dinner if you wish. Here is the telegram. I was out when it came. Nothing serious can be the matter, of course. Still, it will be best to go."

Then he wheeled about with a wild sort of fury. At the terrible aspect of his features she drew back with a startled cry.

“Do not take the trouble to utter more lies, woman!” he said with harsh distinctness. “The time for that is past.”

A cold trembling crept through her veins. “What do you mean? you have news of papa? well, how is he?”

“He is dead!” Philip exclaimed in the same loud tone, and holding his head erect he walked by her into the bedroom.

She remained as though transfixed. A numb horror possessed her. Her mind grew confused, and she thought she was about to faint. By a strong effort of the will, she summoned composure enough to enable her to reach the adjoining room. Philip had lighted the gas and was brushing his hair before the glass. He saw her blanched countenance reflected in the mirror and his lips curved into a sneer that was like a grimace.

“How—when did he—die?” she whispered. Her strength ebbed away. She sank upon a chair, covering her eyes with both hands. A storm of hysterical weeping shook her from head to foot. Philip tossed the hair-brush upon the table. Then he approached her, grasping her arm with an iron force that made her cringe and wince.

“Listen!” he said from between his closed teeth. “He died alone—do you hear? died waiting for you, calling your name piteously—while you, you were enjoying yourself with your lover. Yes, your lover! do not start, Marion. You see I know everything. I have known it for weeks. I have watched your every mood and look. I—I can’t tell what has kept me from killing you and him, but now, now I no longer care. You have crushed every thought and wish of mine. You have buried every aspiration. Do as you please; go where you like. It doesn’t matter. But if you have a single spark of conscience left, the horrible memories of to-

day will haunt you forever. You will reap punishment tenfold greater than any you ever dreamed of. Yet why do I speak of conscience? what should such a woman as you know of conscience? you have no heart—no pity, no honor—no truth.” The passionate vehemence of his tone thrilled her with an indefinite consternation. He was so close to her that his hot breath burned her cheek. His eyes were black as ebony, and in their contracted pupils, gleamed two tiny dots of flame. “You will never learn what and how I have suffered,” he went on. “I have been tempted and tortured beyond belief. I have hated you with a deadly hatred. You must have seen it. I hope you saw it and understood its implacable force. That would be a slight satisfaction, to know that you felt my bitter hatred. I have prayed for vengeance. Often while you slept I have longed to murder you; not as men murder ordinarily, but foully, brutally, vilely. And if I do not strike you to the earth at this mo-

ment it is because my suffering has exhausted itself, because my feelings are dead within me. Even so, as I look at you I sicken and grow faint as I might at sight of some rank, ill-smelling weed."

He relaxed his grip and flung her arm from him so that it struck her breast. She sat quite motionless, appalled, and staring now with dry eyes into vacancy. Her parted lips were like stone. Philip went toward the mantelpiece, and resting his elbows on the corner bowed his head. Beads of perspiration shone upon his temples. Through the open door they could hear the loud ticking of the clock in the dining-room, and presently Sarah's shrill soprano floated from the kitchen—

"I've been redeemed, I've been redeemed,
Washed by the blood of the lamb."

Marion rose unsteadily. Her one idea was to get away as quickly as possible. It seemed to her that she had nothing more to do in this place that she loathed. She made

no attempt to speak. Without a syllable she left the bedroom and presently the house itself. The cool crisp evening air blew refreshingly upon her fever-heated face. Night had fallen; the deep blue of the sky was gemmed with stars. The streets swarmed with hurrying forms. The noise of rolling carriage wheels echoed far and near. The voices of newsboys calling the names of the evening papers smote sharply upon her ears. Her momentary perplexity had given way to an acute alertness of brain that made her singularly alive to all that was passing around her. She walked a couple of blocks and hailed a car going in the direction of the Lexington Avenue boarding-house. The democratic conveyance was packed with struggling men and women, who freely exhibited the keen American humor that seems to be brought prominently forth by adverse circumstances and uncomfortable surroundings. Marion made her way with difficulty inside the door. She

took out her purse to pay her fare, but her fingers shook so she dropped several small coins upon the floor, eliciting guffaws of amusement from the persons near by. At each stop of the car gigglings broke from the women and guttural laughter or smothered oaths from the men. A bedizened girl dressed in glaring red, pushed and elbowed a passage from the rear platform, and as a man rose from his seat she promptly slipped into it. An indignant outburst issued from a stout, apoplectic Irishwoman, who, with a market-basket on her arm, was jammed in between two fat men at the upper end of the car. "Well, I like that, I do!" she bawled in stentorian tones. "Things is come to a pretty pass when a critter with a painted face an' a cotton figger gets a nice seat, while a rale leddy o' quality like me has to stan' up. That's perliteness, ain't it?"

The girl colored and flashed an indignant look at the speaker. "A fine lady you are," she screamed in retort.

Roars of mirth followed these observations, and amid the general demoralization the conductor shouted—"Come now, step lively! move up, can't ye? Plenty o' room for everybody."

Marion clutched desperately one of the straps attached to the roof and tried to keep her balance. She strained her eyes to see the numbers of the streets that flashed by in blurred outlines upon the lamp-posts. As she neared her destination a fresh feeling of physical weakness and fright overcame her. The thought of her father lying dead, and of Philip's terrible denunciation, filled her mind with forebodings she could not quell. When she stepped down from the car, she almost reeled. Could it be possible that her father was dead and that Philip had discovered everything? What an ending to her happy day! What a hideous travesty of her reckless enjoyment! She wondered why she had attempted no denial of Philip's accusations. Had she lacked the strength, or per-

haps the inclination—or both? Well, it did not matter now. Nothing mattered. Her old life was a thing of the past. She had long expected a crisis of some sort. It had come at last, and when the first grief and shock had worn away she would have nothing to regret.

She mounted the stoop, and in the mild glimmer that proceeded from the transom above the oaken doors she saw long loops of black fluttering in soft curves from the bell-handle. The servant who admitted her gazed curiously at her pallid, twitching features. Marion opened the parlor-door with cold, unsteady fingers. Several familiar figures advanced to meet her. She saw Charles and Emily, Miss Bertram and the colonel. The piano stood open, and on it was the score of a lately composed song. The purple dressing-gown with the orange lining lay on the sofa. Cards of invitation for an “Evening” were piled upon the table ready for mailing.

“Well, Marion,” said Emily, with a proper degree of mournfulness, “I suppose you know it is all over. Is Philip with you?”

“No,” Marion responded, listlessly. “He was—I think he was with him at—at the end. Tell me about it.”

Emily began to cry. She drew her sister away from the others.

“Oh, I am so distressed, dear. I was out for the day when the message summoning me arrived. I never got it until five o’clock. We had dinner an hour earlier than usual and we came over at once, but it was too late. I hear Philip was with him for ever so long. Where were you? It must have been a great comfort to him to have Philip—at least I hope so. Poor dear papa! I hate myself now when I think of our silly quarrels. They seem so trivial and—and useless. But, indeed, I never bore him any ill-will. You never heard me say I bore him any ill-will, did you? No, of course not. It was nothing but childishness. Do you

think he knows—do you suppose he can see us now, Marion?”

“Oh, don’t ask me any questions, Emily. I am too upset to think. I don’t want to think.”

She moved toward the bedroom. “It’s utter nonsense,” Charles was saying to Miss Bertram. “What’s the use of ordering a rosewood coffin? What’s the use of going to such expense? When people are dead how can it matter what they are put into? Plain walnut is good enough—plenty good enough. I’m sure *I* don’t want to be buried in anything better than plain walnut. If I were the Prince of Wales it wouldn’t make any difference. But, of course, if you begin listening to the undertaker there’s no telling what you’ll end by getting. He’ll cheat you out of your very eyes and pile on the items. Well, I guess I ought to know all about it. I remember how it was when my sister died. This isn’t my first experience with funerals. Now I say it’s going to be walnut, and plain

walnut at that. Nobody wants to see a man's coffin decked out like a jewel-box. When the fellow comes back I shall tell him so."

"You know, dear," Emily whispered, tearfully, "Charles intends to pay for the funeral. He is really the most generous creature. I don't believe papa has left a single penny. A horrid Jew came to fetch the sofa a little while ago; but even if he had left anything Charles would pay for the funeral just the same. Isn't it nice of him? Very few men would be so generous as Charles."

"Let me go in alone," said Marion, pushing back one side of the folding door. "He was always more to me than he was to you, Emily—and somehow I—I cannot forgive myself. I shall bear the reproach always—always——"

Her voice broke. Emily opened her tear-dimmed eyes a little wider. "The reproach of what, dear?" she asked.

"Oh, nothing—I can't tell even you, Emily," Marion answered, miserably.

"I'm afraid you're morbid," Emily said, forcing a wintry smile. She closed the door softly and rejoined Charles.

Alone in the bedroom, Marion turned with nervous dread, her cowardly gaze seeking the familiar form of her father. The gas was lighted on either side of the dressing-bureau and shed a tremulous gleam across the bed, that was now in perfect order. A fresh white spread covered it and lace-edged pillow-shams leaned stiffly against the dingy head-board. The undertaker had already prepared the body for burial. The hideous receptacle known as an ice-box rested on its supports of wood in the middle of the floor, and beneath the pane of glass at one wedge-shaped end, she saw her father's face, set in stiff lines, the beautiful silvery hair waving above the marble brow. She approached with timorous, lagging steps; she heard her loud, agitated breathing rise and fall upon the intense, ghost-like silence of the chamber. She knelt down and pressed her cold lips

against the colder glass. A gush of frenzied tears came to her relief. As she crouched beside the inanimate form of Richard Hartly in the forlorn room, her childhood, wherein he had played so large and unselfish a part, rose up before her—pale pictures of her life in the Tenth Street house, when the days had slipped by on wings of gold amid laughter and song. And even in these later years of grief and disappointment she had been a bright spot in his life, and he had been something in hers. How glad he had always been to see her! How his eyes would sparkle as she opened the parlor door! How eager he was to confide to her all his little plans and projects! he had loved and trusted her. Yet she had neglected him in his last hours—neglected him for her lover, and now it was all over. Everything that bound her to her former existence had been swept away in the grim shades of this solitary death-bed!

For a while she sobbed unrestrainedly.

Once or twice a word of contrition escaped her, and her tearful eyes sought to find in that purplish countenance under the glass some trace of responsiveness, some sign of comprehension and pardon. By and by bodily weariness overcame her and she staggered to her feet. The chamber became horrible to her. She felt as though the chill of a charnel house infested it. She shudderingly withdrew, seeking the more wholesome atmosphere of the parlor.

"He looks very natural, doesn't he, dear?" asked Emily, and Miss Bertram advanced with sympathetically extended hand. "Now, Mrs. Latimer, what do you say? how soon ought the funeral to take place?"

"I—I haven't thought about it," Marion answered, feeling instinctively that Miss Bertram and the colonel had come to get items for *Facts*, and expecting to see the note-book presently appear from sheer force of habit.

"Well, I suppose you will put on mourn-

ing. But take my advice and don't get crape. It costs a heap of money and doesn't wear at all."

"Oh, going into mourning is all bosh, anyway," said Charles, walking up and down with his hands thrust into his trousers pockets. "You can be just as sorry in a blue dress as in a black one. I don't approve of mourning for *my* family. Marion of course can do as she pleases."

A moment's silence ensued. Then the colonel cleared his throat.

"H'm—about the funeral—we certainly do not wish to do anything improper. But you see, Mr. Carter, this isn't a private house, and I'm sure if the body were left here over to-morrow the boarders would object. In fact, several have already spoken to Mrs. Von Spitzenheim. You understand?"

The colonel flung out his leg and meditatively twirled his moustache.

"Certainly, certainly," replied Charles.

"If that undertaker ever comes back I'll fix things in about five minutes. Why the deuce doesn't he come?"

"Emily," Marion said presently, "is your brougham at the door?"

"Yes, dear, it was ordered an hour ago. But we must wait here for that dreadful man."

"Well, let me take it. I am alone, you know. I'll send it back at once."

She spoke with febrile haste. Emily assented briefly. Charles consulted his watch. "Damn that fellow! I'm not going to wait here all night," he observed, gradually working himself into a passion.

Marion kissed her sister. "Good-night, Emily," she whispered.

"Good-night, dear. Shall I see you to-morrow?"

"Perhaps—I can't say," she answered in so strange a tone that Emily regarded her attentively.

"You look ill, Marion."

“No—I am quite well—only tired.”

She went out slowly. Emily's carriage was standing before the door. The footman recognized her and touched his hat.

“Where to, ma'am? Home?”

“No,” she replied, unsteadily. “Drive me to the Wickham—that large apartment house in upper Broadway.”

The man stared, but mounted the box and gave the order. Marion leaned back against the cushions and closed her eyes.

Wayne had dined early and was sitting at his desk writing when her timid knock disturbed him. The room was fragrant with the odor of cigarettes, and filmy clouds of pearly vapor hung above his head. He started to his feet in genuine astonishment as she entered. In an instant all sorts of dread suspicions, and dawnings of unpleasant possibilities flashed through his mind. Her sudden and unheralded appearance in his apartment at this hour disconcerted him by its suggestions of probable happenings of a serious char-

acter and of a nature too personal to be welcome. He threw his cigarette aside and came forward with an exclamation of inquiry. She was very white and plainly disconcerted. He perceived at once the poignant emotion under which she labored. For an instant she stood mutely regarding him, attempting to force a smile that refused to come. His wonder deepened into alarm. He was the first to find his voice.

“Marion, what brings you here at this time? Something has happened?”

“Yes, everything. Wait a moment. I will tell you presently. I must collect my ideas first. My brain is horribly confused. Give me a glass of water if you have any.”

“I will give you wine. That is better,” he answered, composedly. He was not the man to lose his head in trying circumstances. His clear-cut features relaxed not a whit as he poured some wine from a decanter on the table and handed it to her. She drank it eagerly, leaning back wearily in the chair he

had placed for her. Neither spoke for a moment. Finally she said, earnestly :

“ You asked me what my coming here meant. Well, it means all that it can mean, or else it means nothing. Do you understand ? It means that I will never see Philip again—and that my father is dead, so that I have no one—no one in the world but you. Say you are glad, Harold, say it ! ”

He knelt beside her, taking both her cold little hands in his. “ My poor, poor child, you are terribly excited. Don’t talk, if it hurts you,” he said, soothingly.

“ Oh, but I must talk ! I must tell you ! You can’t imagine what I have been through since we parted this afternoon.”

“ Well, no matter, dear. Nothing can ever efface the recollection of our perfect day together. You know that ! You know that I shall cherish the memory forever. How we have loved each other to-day ! I never thought I could love as I love you. Never mind what has followed. You shall

tell me about it when you are calmer. Sit still, and rest a while." He smoothed her hair gently, and the caress stirred her into new life.

"I can't wait! I must tell you instantly. It is all over between Philip and me. I will never live with him again. I can never go back to him. You see, poor papa died so suddenly! I did not think when I went out with you this morning, Harold, that I should not see him any more. But he is dead! He died while I was so happy with you and not giving him a thought. Philip somehow knew it—he spoke as if he knew it. Oh, how he spoke to me! What horrible words! He was mad, I think. I was afraid he meant to kill me, so I went away—first to papa—then I came here. What an experience! The shock of seeing papa lying dead—and those words of Philip's——"

"Then he suspects that we love each other?" Wayne asked, calmly.

"Suspects! He suspects nothing. I tell

you he knows. He says he has known it for weeks."

An odd smile crossed Wayne's lips. He rose and paced the floor with uneasy strides. "So he knows!" he said at last, unconcernedly. "H'm! I presume he means to shoot me. Of course he is bound to shoot me, and if he does I shall let him do so without attempting to defend myself. After all, there is something interesting in allowing a man you have injured to shoot you down as if you were a dog. It is more than interesting, it is heroic. I shall compare myself to the Christian martyrs. Only I am a thousand times more useful than any Christian martyr that ever lived."

"Oh, Harold, don't jest about it! Not that Philip would attempt that sort of revenge, or satisfaction, whichever you choose to call it. He said he did not care what became of me—or where I went." Her lip began to quiver. "I have always thought he had a special reason for hating you—that in

short, he bore you a grudge for something. But of course it could not be true."

He did not reply immediately. "And what if it *were* true?" he asked, softly.

"Then it is true! Why did you never tell me—why?"

"What would have been the good? It happened long ago, when we were both little more than boys."

"It was a woman? It must have been a woman!"

"Naturally. She had the bad taste to prefer me to him, and he never forgave it. You did not know he had loved before he met you?"

"No. Who was this girl?"

"Oh, a pretty little creature from the country. He—your husband, was to have married her. You see, that complicated matters!"

"And you made love to her? You took her away from him?"

"My dear, she came of her own accord.

Why not? I had money and he had none. A pretty woman must have money. Is it not so?"

"Yes," she assented, thinking of herself. "How strange," she added, "that he never mentioned it! He would never confess why he disliked you. But of course this explains it." A sudden fear overcame her. "What will he say — what will he do—when he finds out that—that you have also taken me? He will kill us both. A moment ago I thought he would do nothing; but I know now that he will kill us both."

"Oh, no. He let me alone before, and I fancy he will do so again. But why do we speak of what he may or may not do? The present and nothing else concerns us. Your father is dead—there is only your sister to consider. You have seen her?"

"Yes. She was there—at the boarding-house with Charles. But I said nothing about myself. They will find out soon enough. Emily will not turn against me.

She loves me dearly, and she knows what Philip is. She would be glad if he got a divorce and left me free, but there is Charles! You have no idea what a hard nature he has. When I think how he treated papa! oh, he has absolutely no heart! He thinks only of money. If I were rich he would laugh and say my leaving Philip was a good joke."

A short silence ensued. Wayne returned to his desk, lighted a fresh cigarette, and began to toy absently with his pen. In spite of his apparent indifference he was troubled at this unlooked-for event. He tried to foresee the issue and at the same time he shrank from it, evading too close a scrutiny. Certainly, Marion had acted hastily and consequently unwisely in coming to him. She should have confided in her sister, and thus escaped compromising herself fatally, as was now unavoidable, but of course he could not tell her this. In her present state of excitement and desperation he could not say openly that he deplored the step she had

taken. Personally, he did not regret it, except in so far as he abhorred scenes and scandals. He loved her, but what then? He did not wish to marry. Even if Philip should apply for a divorce and obtain it, marriage was not in Wayne's line at all. He would never marry. Yet he grew tender as he thought of his love. Never had she appealed alike to mind and senses as she had done that day! he had been enthralled, fascinated, and the glamour was on him still. And at this significant moment how exquisitely fair she was with her white face and those tired, pathetic eyes! There was about her a singularly morbid charm, whose influence he had not felt before. But the dire consequences of this unpremeditated act annoyed him. After all it was a mistake to become absorbed in a woman. With all his experience he should have known better. And if she remained with him what would happen when he grew tired of her?

He glanced at her, biting his lips. She

lay back in the easy-chair, the gas light shining full upon her, the pale gold of her hair showing lustreless against the warm amber of the satin. As he looked, he was moved by conflicting desire and annoyance. By to-morrow his name and hers would be bruited from one end of New York to the other. The papers would tell the whole story with amazing adjectives and preposterous head-lines. Yet he loved her and pitied her. He wanted her to himself—for a time. The past might be forgotten in the intense, satisfying joy of the present. The future? Well, the future might take care of itself. He had never troubled himself with the future. He did not intend to do so now.

He finished his cigarette. The clock on the chimney-piece marked the hour of nine. Presently he approached her, drawing a chair beside her own, and for a time they talked together in low tones.

XIV.

PHILIP did not change his position for some time after Marion had gone. He was roused at last by Sarah, who came to announce dinner. As he walked apathetically into the dining-room the servant stared, perceiving at once that something was amiss. "Ain't Mrs. Latimer coming?" she inquired pausing by the kitchen door with the beer in one hand, and the bread in the other. "No. She is out. Her father—Mr. Hartly—died this afternoon," Philip responded, wondering at the calmness with which he was able to speak.

"My!" exclaimed Sarah in monosyllabic amazement. She put the beer down, adding, "That must have been a summons she got this morning. Well, I hope as how you'll eat your dinner, sir. I've got a nice biled

chicken. I biled it specially because Mrs. Latimer said the gravy I made last week was too greasy."

Philip helped himself to the chicken, ate a few mouthfuls, and pushed his chair back from the table.

"I don't think I want any more, Sarah. I don't feel like eating; I am going out myself by and by."

In the study the shadows were deep and shroud-like. The lamp-light made a zone of radiance upon the papers and books. A pang, sharp as a knife-thrust, shot through him as he thought of his work. How was he to finish it? what had become of his artistic perceptions? all his enthusiasm, his passion, the vehemence of creative faculties that had formerly so boldly asserted themselves, had vanished utterly, leaving nothing but torpid indifference behind them, like the white ashes that remain from an extinguished flame. The dull vacancy of his mind angered him with the fierce revolt of impo-

tence. He knew that if work had ever been a necessity to him it was trebly so now. He must labor unceasingly and strive to forget his misfortune. He must concentrate his intellect and his energy upon some mental effort that would absorb him to the exclusion and the oblivion of all else. He must and he would. Already he saw in imagination some splendid achievement that rose in majesty from this crushing despair that now weighed him down.

He poured out and drank what remained of the brandy. Then the volume he had been asked to review for the *Evening Messenger* caught his eye and he opened it, settling himself back in his chair, that the light might fall on the pages. A passage attracted his attention, and he read on, his interest temporarily aroused. He searched on the table for a pencil to make some notes, and finding none, he grew impatient and called Sarah.

“Sarah, I want a pencil. Where are my

pencils? I had a dozen last week. You must have swept them off the table with your infernal dusting-brush."

Sarah came in grumbling and protesting. She gave him a blunt pencil. "Here's one the butcher left. It's all I've got." He sat down beside the lamp and resumed his reading, jotting on a sheet of paper various impressions as they occurred to him. The stimulating effect of the brandy wore off in a little while, and he shut the book up, yawning sleepily. He realized that it was growing late, and he thought of Marion. Where had she gone? to the boarding-house to look at her father's dead body! hardly. She had cared nothing for him while he lived so why should his death affect her? was she perhaps at Emily's! no. He knew where she had gone. She was with Wayne. They were together at this instant trying to decide what they should do. Well, what did it matter? but even as he put this question to himself, he felt impelled to find

both Wayne and Marion, and having found them, face them boldly and come to an understanding. Besides there was the promise he had made Mr. Hartly. He intended to keep it. He had said, in the sacred presence of death, that he would consider his wife's welfare, no matter what should occur, and he meant to abide by the pledge. He unlocked a drawer at the base of one of the bookcases, and rummaging among the odds and ends it contained, extracted a paper, that, after glancing at, he placed in his breast-pocket. A sinister smile crossed his face. "I will make my word good," he exclaimed aloud. He lowered, with steady hand, the pale flame of the lamp, found his hat and coat in the entry, and sped down the stairs into the street.

He remembered Wayne's address perfectly. It had been graven, as it were, in characters of glowing fire upon his memory ever since that morning when suspicion had broadened into certainty. As he walked through the night, inhaling the mild, spring-

touched atmosphere, some of the old desperate feeling came back to him, and his features grew hard and cruel. He quickened his pace, never pausing until he reached the vaulted door of the tall building he sought, with its branches of gas lights outspread on either side. He went in, the settled pallor of his skin alone betraying the strain under which he bore himself. The little bent old man in the elevator eyed him doubtfully.

"Mr. Wayne is at home?"

"Y—es, sir. But he's engaged. He can't see anyone."

"Oh, indeed! There is a lady there, is there not?"

"Well, sir, I'm sure I don't know. But Mr. Wayne's orders was not to admit anybody."

"He will admit me," said Philip. "He is expecting me. We have business together." He slipped a coin into the old man's hand as he spoke. No further objection was offered. The elevator shot up

briskly to the landing just outside Wayne's rooms. Then it descended more slowly, and Philip stood alone in the partial gloom of the corridor. He did not knock. Presently he gently turned the handle of the door, and finding it unlocked, he entered with a daring that was almost defiance.

At first he could distinguish nothing except the vaporous haze of cigarette smoke through which the lights shone in flamboyant reddish splotches. Then he perceived the two figures he was in search of. A startled cry broke from Marion when she saw who had forced his way in so uncereemoniously. She rose, as also did Wayne. The latter was no dastard, yet his lips blanched. He stood in silence for a moment, drawn up to his full height, with both arms folded across his breast. There was in his bearing a dignity that was allied to a challenge and that caused Philip to pitch his voice in an even monotone when he finally spoke.

“Do not alarm yourselves,” he said, deliberately. “I have not come to kill—nor even to reproach——”

Wayne’s countenance relaxed. “May I ask what you *have* come for?” he inquired.

“Yes, there are some things that must be said, and I intend to say them. There are questions to be asked and that you must answer. That is why I have come.”

“You choose a strange hour for this very important interview,” replied Wayne, with an undisguised sneer and rising anger.

“The hour is of small consequence,” retorted Philip. Suddenly a flash of rage darted from his eyes. “Harold Wayne,” he exclaimed coming a step nearer, “do you realize what I have to tell you? Do you recall the fact that for the second time you have striven to ruin my life? Once, long ago, you stole my happiness. Now—now you rob me of my honor. But even so, you shall not crush me. On the contrary, it is you who will bear the burden.”

His tone was vibrant and had in it a ring of intense passion. Wayne shrugged his shoulders. "Perhaps Mrs. Latimer may not care to hear these youthful reminiscences," he said. He loosened his arms, letting them drop to his sides with an outward gesture that seemed to invite a blow. A nameless terror seized Marion.

"Philip, listen! wait a moment!" she cried. But he paid no more attention than if he had been stricken with deafness. He put his face close to Wayne's.

"What is it to me who hears us! the time for concealment is past. Do you recollect how you stole from me the girl I was to have married? how you lured her away, filling her pure mind with poisonous suspicion against me! And to what end? Only that you might betray her—gratify your abominable lust."

Wayne did not answer immediately. At last he said, with dry lips: "I am not accountable to you, Philip Latimer, for what

I may or may not have done. But since you have evidently been misinformed in regard to this matter I will tell you that I did *not* lure her away from you, as you are pleased to put it. She came to me willingly enough, and when she thought she could find a better protector than I she left me."

"Curse you! that is a lie and you know it!"

Wayne's eyes flashed. "Take care!" he exclaimed, warningly. "Do not provoke me too much, else I may forget that I am in the presence of a lady."

"I repeat that I shall say what I came to say. Now, listen to me, Harold Wayne. I do not mean that you shall treat this woman who has borne my name"—his lip curled involuntarily—"as you treated the other. Do you understand me? I say you shall not make her the victim of your damnable instincts. You shall keep her forever—forever—do you hear? you love each other ap-

parently, and I am quite willing to resign her to you." He turned to Marion, who sat with averted face lacking the courage to meet her husband's gaze. She cowered in the chair when she heard him address her directly. "Madam," he began, coldly, "I am sorry you have made so poor a choice, but such as it is, you are welcome to it. One thing, however, I insist upon. This afternoon when I stood by your father's death-bed, I promised him that I would religiously guard your welfare. He died, thank God, in ignorance of your dishonor. Had you been ten times as vile—had you been steeped in crime, I should have refrained from wounding him with the knowledge of your degradation. He believed in you to the end. That trust was sacred to me, and although I longed to cry aloud your infamy, I felt bound to silence. But," he added, his voice now tinged with bitterest sarcasm, "I wish to prove my allegiance to the dead—to him who was my earliest and

best friend—by making an honest woman of you so far as it lies in my power to do so. Therefore, I shall apply without delay for a divorce, and when I have obtained it, you and your lover shall marry each other. You see I am generous as well as just.”

Wayne advanced a trifle so that the light struck his colorless face. “And what,” he said indistinctly, “if I decline to submit to your orders?”

Philip smiled. “In that case,” he replied, composedly, “I shall be compelled to resort to more stringent measures.”

“I forbid you to dictate terms to me!” cried Wayne, in reckless fury. Then he continued with forced calmness—“what I may choose to do of my own accord is no business of yours. But I tell you frankly I will be driven to nothing.” He moved aside and finding a cigarette on the table, lighted it.

Then Marion started to her feet and stood midway between the two men. She waited

for the silence to be broken, but no sound was forthcoming. Why did not Wayne promise what Philip asked? Why was he not ready and anxious to save her from threatened disgrace? still she waited and still no word came from him. Into her mind had stolen a dread contingency that she feared to speak aloud. A sickening uneasiness crept over her. She held out one hand appealingly, but Wayne continued to puff the cigarette with his face set in adamant lines, defying the woman now as well as the man. All the evil passions that hitherto had lain dormant in his despicable nature, were displayed in every separate lineament. Philip glanced at Marion and smiled sardonically.

“You have heard me,” he said, significantly.

“And so have you heard *me*,” Wayne retorted, insolently. “Once more, I distinctly refuse to accept your terms and would-be bargains. I shall consult my inclinations and not yours. You cannot com-

pel me, nor can you intimidate me by threats."

Philip threw back his head, regarding him contemptuously from beneath his half-closed lids. "I think," he said tranquilly, "that you will accede to anything I may choose to demand!"

The other wheeled round sharply. "What do you mean? You must be mad."

"I mean this," cried Philip. He thrust one hand into his breast-pocket and brought forth the paper he had placed there before leaving home. "Do you know what this is?" he inquired, loudly. "Well, it is *her* last statement, duly witnessed—the statement she made to me on her dying bed—and which brands you, Harold Wayne, as a murderer. Ah, you turn pale and shrink away, but I am not yet done." He came closer until his face nearly touched that of Wayne. "Do you recollect a certain night six years ago?" he went on in a low, fierce tone. "You had grown tired of the girl who loved

you and who had sacrificed to you all she had to give, and you sought to rid yourself of a tie that had become galling and obnoxious. What did you do to that woman who trusted you? What, I ask, did you do?"

For a moment Wayne stood with clenched hands as if rooted to the floor. Brave as he was, he cringed and turned white to the lips. Philip's eyes blazed with malignant wrath.

"You cannot answer, so I will tell you what you did," he said in a terrible accent. "You gave her poison, hoping she would die before another day should break. Fortunately, your accursed scheme did not succeed. She fled for her life and was picked up in the street writhing in agony. It was I who found her and had her carried to the hospital, where she yielded up her young life and that of the child she bore. It was I who tried in vain to soothe the last moments of one I had formerly loved and whom you had ruined. It was I who took from her

lips the full statement of the wrongs she had suffered at your hands. That statement is here. Do you dare to say I do not speak the truth! Do you dare to say her story was false? Can you bear to have that story investigated?"

His tremulous voice grew husky. His upraised hand shook as with palsy. Marion uttered a cry of horror.

"Liar!" shouted Wayne, beside himself with rage.

Philip retreated a step, replacing the paper in his pocket. He buttoned his coat deliberately. "I think our account is settled," he resumed. "Therefore, I repeat that if within twenty-four hours after I have obtained my decree of divorce from that woman yonder, you do not marry her, this paper shall be placed in the hands of the city authorities, and I will have you arraigned on the charge of murder."

"Harold!" cried Marion, grasping Wayne's arm, desperately. Her eyes sought

his with a look of piercing agony. "Harold!" she said again, "why don't you speak? Why don't you defend yourself? Why do you tremble so, why—why?"

"Murderer!" hissed Philip, from between his teeth.

Wayne darted forward, uttering a cry of rage. On the table beside him lay a paper-knife of wrought-bronze shaped like a scimitar and sharpened to the keenness of a razor. He snatched it up, rushing madly upon Philip, who, seeing the movement in time, parried it with a blow that sent the weapon flying across the room, while Wayne reeled and sank breathless and quivering into a chair. A look of deadly hatred shone all at once in Marion's countenance. She leaned over him as might some accusing phantom from the other world. "Coward!" she whispered, in his ear, "coward!" She clutched the back of the chair to keep herself from falling. Her blue eyes dilated with a stony abhorrence as they encountered

his rigid features. He was sitting in the same attitude he had taken on the memorable occasion of her first visit to his rooms, his profile outlined like sculptured marble upon the crimson velvet of the portière, and the diamond he wore on one supple finger flashing in prismatic sparks wherever the red light caught it. Slowly she raised herself and faced her husband, her drawn mouth and ashen pallor giving her a hideous appearance.

“Philip!” she exclaimed, in agonized supplication, as with a horrible sinking of the heart she saw him move toward the door. At that moment a slight portion of her old love for him seemed to revive. But he paid no heed to her appeal.

She ran to him and clasped his arm. Her passionate words were pregnant with fear and longing. “Philip—hear me! I have made a mistake—a frightful mistake—take me back!”

He broke into a harsh laugh. “You have

made your choice! Abide by it!" he said, advancing nearer to the door. She clung to him wildly.

"Philip—pardon—pardon!" tears rolled down her pallid cheeks. She had aged ten years in as many minutes.

"No!" he said, standing upright with his back to the door.

"Oh, have pity, Philip! Take me back! I implore you, take me back!"

"No!" he said again, brutally. He flung her from him. She looked at Wayne. An expression of indescribable loathing crossed her face. Then she staggered forward and fell in a dead faint.

"Take her. She is yours," said Philip. He opened the door and passed out.

An odd sort of exultation overcame him when he had left the house. His blood surged madly. Every nerve tingled. A noise as of rushing waters sounded in his ears. Withal the splendor of the night hung about him like a material enchantment. A

torpid breeze blew in his face. The pale fire of the stars shone in glistening drops upon the intense cobalt sky. A fibrous silvery mist stretched along the western horizon. The young moon, saffron-hued, cast argent rays upon the sidewalk, and the mystic effulgence that spread to his own flying figure had for him the semblance of an occult meaning that was akin to prophecy.

And little by little his genius struggled within him, striving for utterance, and ready at any moment to start forth as the sudden blossoming of a flower. He felt an eager ecstasy steal through his veins. Behind him lay the past with its horrors buried forever in oblivion. Before him art and fame stood and waited. From this time on the Philip Latimer of former days was dead, and a new man rose in his stead—rose to a mighty eminence on uplifted wings. “I will do now what would have been impossible under the old conditions,” he thought, and the reflection filled him with a vague charm.

How silent the study was! Surely the clock must have stopped. He placed his ear to the dial and listened. No, it was going. He could hear its regular tick-tick. Yet something in the room affected him unpleasantly. What was it? Ah, yes! He knew. It was the perfume from the violets that stood on the table. They had been a present from Wayne to Marion, no doubt. Philip removed them from the vase carefully. He disliked to have flowers near him when he worked. Their faintly pungent odor distracted his attention and made his head ache. The window was still open, so he walked toward it and threw the fragrant bouquet into the street. Owing to the immense height of the apartment he could not see where it had fallen, but he fancied it had landed in the black mud and not on the pavement. A strange restlessness possessed him. He paced the floor for a time, unable to sit still or even to concentrate his ideas. All at once he perceived

that the gas had been left burning in the bedroom. He thought of the needless extravagance, and went in to extinguish the flame. The white bed with its two pillows side by side caught his eye. Sarah had arranged it for the night. The covering was turned down at the top and two night-dresses, one adorned with pink ribbons, lay outspread upon the sheets.

He re-entered the study and began to look over his papers. Where had he left off in the story he was writing? The manuscript appeared to be hopelessly disarranged. Sarah probably had been dusting the table again. Well, everything would be very different in future—very different. After some time had elapsed he succeeded in getting the pages in order and mentally taking up the thread of the narrative. But something else annoyed and interrupted him. He had left the bedroom door ajar. A black filament of darkness made prominent the surrounding dead white paint and attracted

his gaze at every instant. A little irritably he started up and shut the door. Then he resumed his seat at the table, dipped his pen into the ink, and with a smile began the sixth chapter of his serial.

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